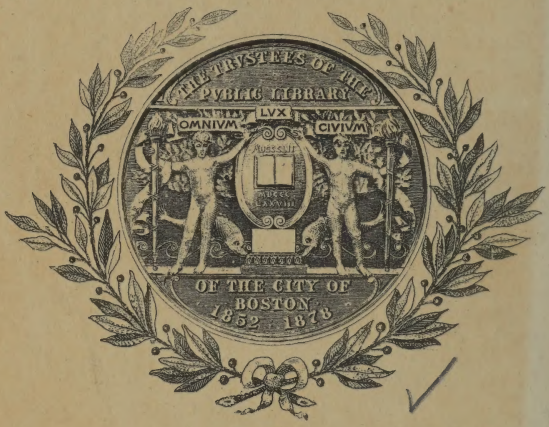
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A FINAL BURNING OF BOATS ETC.

PAN II (*see* '*The Curate*' *p.* 59)

THE AUTHOR AND PAN III (1928)

A FINAL BURNING OF BOATS ETC.

BY

ETHEL SMYTH

AUTHOR OF 'IMPRESSIONS THAT REMAINED'
'A THREE-LEGGED TOUR IN
GREECE' ETC.

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A FINAL BURNING OF BOATS, ETC.

OVERTURE TO THIS BOOK

To a memoir writer whose profession is music there is no greater luxury than handling subjects wholly unconnected therewith ; say a tour in Greece, an encounter with a curate, or the portrait of some striking personality you have come across. Further, the present autobiographer, considering it unsportsmanlike to drag in professional topics casually, is careful when dealing with them seriously to adopt highly committal titles for her disquisitions ; such as ' Orchestras at Bay ' or ' Music as Solvent of Domestic Peace ' (see the table of Contents).

But life is a composite affair, and King Charles's head turns up, as we know, independently of our volition. I had thought of adopting some danger signal to warn readers off certain chapters where this has happened ; a red flag under the title, for instance. But this charming device would sensibly increase the cost of printing, and after all be uncalled for except in the following two instances :

' A Final Burning of Boats ' is a rapid autobiographical survey in which of course music plays a part. But the real theme, which the autobiography merely illustrates, is the re-shaping of the eternal sex-problem in these new post-war times of ours—a rather portentous

subject that concerns every man and woman alive to-day except those whom I call 'primrose-path strollers.' And if in 'Catchwords and the Beloved Ignorantsia' music is mentioned, here also it but illustrates points on which the writer feels strongly, and as to which she fancies many people who are interested in artistic abstractions may agree with her.

In any case the perusal of a few paragraphs of these two invisibly-beflagged chapters will settle for the reader whether they are, or are not, literature for Everyman and his female relations. Otherwise the writer can promise that, excepting in the sections which deliberately flaunt a committal title, there is nothing in this book to frighten off any description of layman.

January 1928.

A FINAL BURNING OF BOATS

I

(Autobiographical Sketch-Map with Key : 1889–1927)

Early in the year 1924 an article by the present writer, called ' A Burning of Boats,' appeared in the *London Mercury*, and the first page ran thus :

> Not long ago a group of Mrs. Swynnerton's friends were discussing the honour recently bestowed on her, among them a celebrated painter who began telling us about his visit of congratulation to the new A.R.A.
>
> ' The place was swarming with reporters and photographers,' he said, ' and the strange thing was ' (here his eyes grew round with amazement) ' she seemed actually to be *enjoying* the rumpus ! '
>
> Like most brilliantly successful people, the speaker had long since reduced the evading of camp-followers to a fine art. But as Mrs. Swynnerton's portion had been life-long neglect tempered with streaks of infuriating patronage, this delight in outward and visible signs of eleventh-hour recognition seemed to me infinitely touching, and I said so.
>
> ' All the same it rather surprised me,' he answered, ' for she really is a tremendous swell.'
>
> ' I know,' I said ; ' I remember your declaring twenty years ago that no one alive could paint like Mrs. Swynnerton.'
>
> Here someone remarked that he had probably worked the oracle.

'Oh no,' he said lightly, 'I was abroad at the time; in fact I knew nothing about it till I saw it in the papers'—and one silently wondered for the millionth time how those at the top of the tree can refrain from shaking and belabouring official bodies till they open their sham-exclusive doors to the unrecognised deserving. I spoke of the Order of Merit withheld from Florence Nightingale till she was long past realising what was going forward, and believed that some bolus extracted by Her Majesty's own hands from the Royal Medicine Chest was being offered her. 'Why wait,' I asked, 'till an artist has reached an age when most people's best work is behind them?'

'Well, well,' said the Professor, a delightful man connected with a big School of Painting, 'there's something rather beautiful in recognition coming long after people have ceased to look for it—a blaze of sunset glory!'

It was not the moment for scathing comment on this convenient theory, but I got my chance later. The Professor, who had learned from me that women were being turned out of orchestras though no one contends they do not play as well as men, began assuring me that nothing of the sort happened at the School: 'No sex-prejudice there!' he said. I took leave to wonder if the girl-students would endorse that statement, and incidentally asked about two pictures I had recently seen at an Exhibition. 'Ah! I'm glad you noticed them,' he said, 'they are by a very talented girl who I've been able to help about getting her work hung. And, do you know, *it's surprising how the success she is having has increased her powers; the stuff she is turning out now is simply amazing.*'

We were alone. This time the Professor was not let off but invited to reflect on the moral of that last remark of his; to put a belated A.R.A. in one scale, and a fifty years' struggle against discouragement, poverty, ill-health, and all the concomitants of unrecognised genius in the other. 'What, pray,' I asked, in

a fine lyrical outburst, 'are rays of sunset glory compared to the noontide blaze that may turn a promising seedling into the finest plant ever grown?'

For the moment he saw it. But few people are willing to exchange a pleasant for an unpleasant reflection; and no doubt next day, once more yielding to the painter's pleasure in an 'effect,' he was remarking to someone else how well inspired the R.A. Council had been in keeping back Mrs. Swynnerton's laurel wreath till the year 1923!

. . . . . .

As the reader may have guessed, the great painter was the late John S. Sargent. Curiously enough, it was only recently (October 1927) that I heard the sequel of the Swynnerton incident, than which, I should say, nothing more cruel has ever been thought out by ironic fate. No sooner was this belated A.R.A. bestowed on her than they discovered that she was past the legal age for retaining it! So they hastily bundled her into the 'Senior A.R.A.' class—which might be called the class of *Senile* Associates, since they are supposed to be too old to serve on Committees, let alone hold office!

The shock of this intelligence caused me to hunt up and re-read my old *Mercury* article, which was a bare statement of the facts, as I myself have found them, of a woman's artistic career in her own country. If to-day I return to this subject, rather than observe an engrained habit of banishing it from my mind, it is because a new situation demands a new analysis. Someone, that is to say some woman, must speak out; and being at odd moments a writer as well as a composer, I have no choice.

The new situation is this; that whereas once upon a time men ruled the roost almost to the complete exclusion of women, to-day not even the staunchest club-window Die-Hard can disguise from himself the fact that this happy state of things is gone beyond recall!

Now if the reader will be kind enough to peruse a short chapter in this book entitled 'What Matters Most in Life,' he will learn that in the writer's humble opinion the instinct to cling to any monopoly you possess is no more an exclusively male characteristic than colds in the head. On the other hand, owing to that roost-rule in the past, men are in a better position for practising collective selfishness than women. And the particular form of it round which this treatise is woven, and which almost amounts to an anti-social combine to keep women out of the running as long as possible—or, when that can't be done, to prevent their getting the big plums—is all the more dangerous because so often it is done secretly. Rubbing shoulders with women workers of every class—of course I am not alluding to primrose-path strollers who know nothing of realities—what amazes me is their unanimous conviction that men dislike witnessing a woman's success and will damp it down if they can. And when I say 'men,' I do not mean the whole male sex—witness the generous press-comments on the triumph of Miss Scott's design for the Shakespere Memorial Theatre—but men who are in the same line of business as the competing woman.

There are exceptions, of course; masses of them. But just as we all know the sensible workman who sees the folly of strikes, but, when the call comes, instantly turns into a sheep, so many a good fellow, who would certainly help and befriend a girl he knows and likes, will fall into line with the rest when it comes to keeping women in general out of orchestras, out of certain trades, and so on. To defeat this policy takes a very strong man; a man like Sir Henry Wood who is convinced, as luckily many men are, that the world needs the brains and the outlook of both sexes. Which sentiment leads me straight into a very painful subject, *Paradise Lost.*

. . . . . .

I wonder how many of us have really read *Paradise Lost*? I have tried it again and again, but am always headed back by the infuriating mutual angle of Adam and Eve—an angle that makes literary girls of to-day shake with laughter, as they can well afford to do in the year 1928! But to that same smug and savage Puritanism that 'put woman in her place' and sealed the prison-door in the name of religion, we owe not only the disappearance of music and merriment from England, but such a stultification of woman's brains, that when they began to use them again some 200 years later, it was with a furtive sense of acting improperly, not to mention having to brave the contempt and anger of their menfolk. Thus it comes that even to-day, in many walks of life, women who have a message to deliver find themselves confronted with a barrier of prejudice and ill-will such as the men who have erected and keep it in repair are never called upon to face. Indeed they will even deny its existence till you point to facts like the orchestral taboo—one of a hundred such!

On certain fields the battle is won. It was always possible to write books in secret (as Jane Austen did), and once your book is published no one can prevent the public from reading it. But although the practice of literature involves no blatant conflict with men's interests, no truculent stepping down into some public arena sacred hitherto to the male, Georges Sand, the Brontës, George Eliot, and others, thought well to adopt masculine or neutral names. And in our own day, in spite of Jane Austen and Maria Edgeworth, the authors of the Irish R.M. and Vernon Lee have followed suit. I don't mind confessing that early in this century it was a slight shock to me to learn that Somerville and Ross were women. That is why I can understand prejudice. But thirty years ago I had never thought about these things.

On other domains than literature the extremest caution was necessary. Sophie Kowaliewsky, who competed anonymously for the Bordin prize, could not keep up the secret of her sex, of course, once she had won it, but other women were glad enough to take advantage of male screens. Caroline Herschell entered the Temple of Fame clinging modestly to her brother's hand ; Florence Nightingale, that 'most violent of women,' as Dr. Jowett, who had loved her, described her in his old age—a world of tenderness in his voice, so I am told—Florence Nightingale, founder of the army transport and hospital systems, knowing (as I was to find out thirty years later) that the quality of her schemes would have no chance against the fact, if it leaked out, that they were drafted by a woman, insisted on their being fathered by Sidney Herbert—a parentage that eventually killed that devoted man. Indeed what you may call, I fear, a natural male reluctance to recognise distinction in our sex has sometimes resulted in comic incidents. Rosa Bonheur was not a shattering genius, I daresay, but she probably painted better than her obscure brother, who was decorated by the French Academy for Rosa's pictures. And only a few years ago the same 'Immortals' proposed to confer the Lêgion d'Honneur on Monsieur Curie for his wife's discovery of radium ! But suddenly the French sense of humour was stirred, and the public defeated that little plot.

Doubtless many female scientists, painters, lawyers—women, in short, who work *for a wage and a position*—would tell the same tale ; yet, as I was about to say when side-tracked by the perennially irritating thought of *Paradise Lost*, there is evidence enough in history that the feminine brain, heart, intuitive power, etc., make up something that should be of value in life. Only a small proportion of women have occupied positions in which men could afford to give them a free hand without loss of

dignity to themselves ; yet among these the percentage of great personalities has been very high. At this moment I can only think of a few, and to look up others is too tiresome ; in the Church, Saints Theresa, Helena, Catherine, and Barbara ; on thrones, that great patriot Jezebel, Boadicea, Maria Theresa, Christina of Sweden, Catherine of Russia (yes !), Elizabeth, Victoria. And, if you know anything about her, don't forget Caterina Sforza, almost a Sovereign.

Joan of Arc must be a terrible problem for the club-window Die-Hard. Yet to my mind this girl who lived in an age of faith and superstition, and was at first carried by the Church—that stream that was eventually to engulf her—is hardly more remarkable than Florence Nightingale or Gertrude Bell, who worked their miracles in the chill atmosphere of modern political life. As for the early Christians, ablaze with such a fire of love that, according to one of them, the flames that licked his charred body seemed to him heavenly caresses, does the courage of these equal that of Mrs. Pankhurst, Lady Constance Lytton, and dozens of less known women, who willed to be tortured—and remember the war was not then in sight—because this was the only road to freedom for women ? ' If men will not do us justice,' cried Mrs. Pankhurst in a magnificent epigram, ' they shall do us violence ! ' I do not care whether my readers bless or curse, admire or execrate the hunger strikers. My point is that they pushed selflessness, endurance, passionate pity and love, in short idealism in its most transcendental form, to a pitch that will be the wonder of the human race as long as this globe spins round the sun. And I maintain that the elements of which their action was compounded are eternally needed and eternally rare.

II

Probably the hardest of all the worlds that women have yet to conquer is that of The Arts, because there are no rules in that game, only chances to be given or withheld. I know little about the experiences of painters and sculptors, except that it took the R.A. Council fifty years to acknowledge the genius of Mrs. Swynnerton, of whom I myself had heard Sargent speak a dozen times in the terms quoted on the first page of this chapter. One notices, too, that Laura Knight, whose name was never mentioned in the lists (drawn up by men, of course) of contemporary English painters, though her work has been famous for decades, was not made an A.R.A. till this autumn—possibly then only from dread of a recurrence of the Swynnerton scandal! And it is a perpetual pain to us women to think that that great artist Feodora Gleichen, whose Memorial to the 27th Division at Monchy was carried out during her last illness, whose group, 'In Memory of the Men,' was erected at Sandhurst, and whose Kitchener Memorial was placed in Khartoum Cathedral after her death, was never honoured by the Royal Academy. In short Miss Scott's success is but a part-payment of a long overdue debt.

Otherwise what goes on in the R.A. precincts is mercifully outside my ken. As for myself, in very early days I guessed that it takes a male of genius to 'perceive' a woman's music at all. Between him and it, the reflection 'there has never been a great woman composer, and *there never will be*,' rises up like a wall. (It will be explained later on why this sterility was inevitable up to recent times.) I think I have told elsewhere how in 1891 I showed my Mass to Hermann Levi, the great Wagner conductor, and met his ejaculation, 'Never, never could I have believed that a woman wrote that!' with 'No!

and what's more, in a week's time you *won't* believe it!'; for I was leaving Munich next day and knew that, bereft of my MS. for reference, he would think there must have been a mistake somewhere—my rendering must have carried him away or something! When I made that remark, Levi, who was as honest as he was wise, stared at me and said slowly, '*I believe you are right*'! And upon my word I do not think that such a revulsion of feeling would have been unreasonable, given the circumstances.

The fact is, that unless we are very remarkable people we see what we bring with us; and what we bring with us are, generally speaking, ready-made prejudices and preconceived notions. None but strongly original minds are able to tackle any new fact or idea on its own merits. Most of us are governed by some predilection, for or against, that lurks at the back of our brain-pan, and a very little reflection will show us that if this were otherwise, if we were not constantly taking various things for granted, life could not go on at all; which is why advertisers so kindly furnish us with fixed notions about the goods it is their business to boom.

Take an experience familiar to average frequenters of picture galleries. You are staring at what seems to be a study of worms, or perhaps they are loose strands of vermicelli. Eventually the lines resolve themselves into two naked women reclining on a bank; their attitude suggests an intimacy that some people might consider excessive, and they appear to be feeding each other with dust. Slightly nauseated, you are passing on, when up comes a man, evidently an expert, who proceeds to dilate to a companion on this picture as one of Augustus John's supremest masterpieces. You glance again, and unconsciously your mind attunes itself to sympathy. Believing that you *ought* to admire that sketch, you are no longer contemplating it with unbiassed eyes.

Now to which of us has this not happened as regards matters in which we lay no claim to special knowledge? I for one do not deny that it has happened to me, and am therefore quite ready to admit the power of preconceived notions (such as that John is a genius, or that woman's music must necessarily be a poor thing) and make allowances. But women creators have worse difficulties than this to contend with; namely (1) the SEX-JEALOUSY already alluded to—an inevitable result, I think, of the changing conditions of to-day, and which, as Lady Astor has said, is often sub-conscious; (2) a certain NATURAL ANTAGONISM BETWEEN THE SEXES of which modern life has made us aware. In the old days no one dreamed of such a thing. Milton's engagingly simple view was that women have no right at all to existence unless as admirers and servants of men; and he certainly would have put down, as a dangerous and pestilent fellow, that candid herdsman in *Don Quixote* who remarks: 'Thus, gentlemen, did I address this goat, for *though she is the best of all my flock* I despise her because she is a female' (a sentiment of which we Dickens lovers catch a tender echo in the relations of Mr. Bagnet and the Old Girl).

To proceed. Let us take SEX ANTAGONISM first.

When I think of certain astounding war-records on fields never before trodden by woman's foot (see my *Streaks of Life*: 'An Open Secret'); when I glance at my own hastily compiled list of luminaries, and reflect on the immense energy, the Sarah Bernhardt-like quality that has surged up in all remarkable women from Sappho to Gertrude Bell, it seems to me that such a spirit, expressing itself in terms of Art, may well clash with that of the male music-world of to-day. I am not referring to the *public*, a bi-sexual crowd which is quite differently attuned, but to those whom for convenience I will call the Faculty—an exclusively male body consisting of

conductors, other people of influence, and the Press. If Florence Nightingale and Sarah Bernhardt, not to speak of Emily Brontë, had been composers, I cannot think their music would have appealed to the Faculty !

If then *volcanic energy* is one characteristic of the female, the *directness* of her methods is another. This quality, that takes one's breath away for instance in the Sapphic fragments, is recognisable in the work of all great women. I find it in Madame de Noailles' poems and V. Sackville West's ' The Land,' to name two living poets. Another point. When the late Sir Walter Raleigh became a don, he was dumbfounded by the terror of each other's opinion that stalks the don-world at our Universities. Now I fancy that even an average woman has more inward freedom than men ; is less conventional, and on the other hand less haunted by the dread, if an artist or a writer, of being commonplace. None of the few women composers who have contrived to get their songs printed are afraid of melody. I think men are. The other day when I told Thibaud I was so glad he was playing Lalo's Symphonie Espagnole he said, ' I cannot tell you how it enchants me to hear you say that ; your Press always runs it down!' I replied ' Of course ! it's too melodious, and they would consider it banal ! '— a bow drawn at a venture, because of an incident I remembered in connection with the *première* of ' The Bosun.'

On that occasion I had drawn up a list of the folk melodies I had used, and owing to a printer's error ' Lord Rendal ' was omitted, with the result that this tune was selected by four or five critics as an instance of the composer's unfortunate gift for turning out the cheaper sort of music-hall ditty. True, they made up for it by declaring my own tune, ' When the sun is setting ' (which by the same token had got into the Folk list), to be a perfect example of English melodic genius,

but the whole incident illustrates a certain distrust of *directness*, of *simplicity* which is at the bottom of those periodical attempts on the part of our highbrows to dethrone Gilbert and Sullivan. My tune really *is* a good one (if I may say so), and in the belief that it was folk these judges permitted themselves to enjoy it, whereas, taking 'Lord Rendal' for a woman's effusion, they closed their hearts against the charm of what is surely one of the most exquisite folk melodies in the world. Now as I believe in directness, it is delightful to find the assessors in the Shakespere Theatre competition stating that 'Miss Scott's conception has *a largeness and simplicity* of handling which no other design possesses.' In this land of compromise gone mad, I cannot help hoping great things of women's growing participation in affairs, and look to her to dismantle wheels within wheels in all directions, and to break up clot upon clot of the vested interests, moral or otherwise, that male ventures too often end in.

Sex antagonism, which does not prevent individual men and women from loving each other more than all the world (but this is another story), is, then, an inevitable result of fundamental divergencies in our respective souls, and the consequence may well be that the Faculty honestly dislikes the works of 'Mrs. Dr. Fell.' The reason why they 'cannot tell,' perhaps, but there it is ; and be sure they will not state the matter to themselves in terms favourable to the other sex ! We must not ask too much of human nature.

But this is quite another thing to sex jealousy, the feeling that creeps into men's hearts when they see women invading what have hitherto been male preserves ; whether it be of the subconscious variety Lady Astor was the first to refer to openly—for which all honour to her—or an open principle in their policy, obvious to all who choose to face facts. And I, for one, really cannot believe that the organised exclusion of women from this

or that branch of activity has been brought about by males in a state of coma.

Goethe tells a charming story of how he and a friend, walking in a garden, suddenly caught sight of two other guests embracing in a side-alley. 'Did you see that?' exclaimed his shocked companion . . . 'can I believe my eyes?' 'I saw it,' replied Goethe calmly, 'but I do *not* believe my eyes!' This spirit, so well bred, so admirably discreet in the above case, works obscurely and less beautifully elsewhere; for instance in the point-blank refusal to *see* the obvious calibre of Mrs. Swynnerton's work, especially as Sargent must have given some of the R.A. Council a lead.

By and by I shall relate some significant instances from my own experience of this obscurely-working, self-unconfessed, anti-woman spirit.

> 'Tis human nature, p'r'aps; if so,
> Then isn't human nature low!

sang Gilbert, and certainly these particular instances do not make pretty reading. But, speaking on the general question, and considering the way the world is re-shaping itself, I ask once more, who can wonder if men are occasionally rather jealous of us? Anyhow I can promise that in showing, as will have to be done, how these wretched sex-considerations were really the fashioning factor of my own life, not one drop of gall is mingled with my ink.

On the other hand, I very definitely desire that women shall know how it was with me, and here is my reason.

As the years pass, one forgets facts it once took an agonizing effort to ignore—(yet ignored they had to be if you were to find courage to go on at all). And once you are dead, perspective with its colossal illusions gets to work. Unfortunates who are still deep in the Slough

of Despond might think, as they glance at some predecessor safe on the far side, 'O, *she* must have been all right from the first ; can never have been up to the neck like us ! ' I want these to realise that they are not as alone as they perhaps believe ; that we women have all travelled that road and are helping where we can—if only by our certainty that they will win through in the end.

And not only because of women should certain things be put on record. Men bred up to the idea of fair play might perhaps exclaim, if they look my way at all : ' What about our not giving women a chance ? Look at Ethel Smyth, D.B.E. and twice Mus. Doc.' To the cheerful theme of these honours I shall return later with particular gusto, inasmuch as in my case it happens to be a most diverting one to handle. Meanwhile, as regards chances given, may I say with all the emphasis at my command, that but for possessing three things that have nothing whatsoever to do with musical genius : (1) an iron constitution, (2) a fair share of fighting spirit, and (3), most important of all, a small but independent income, loneliness and discouragement would have vanquished me years and years ago. And I will add that but for having published two volumes of Memoirs in 1919, my work would be as seldom played to-day as it was then.

III

About 1889, my time of probation in Germany over, I returned to England armed with two volumes of songs, a violin sonata, a 'cello sonata (all these published), besides various MS. works now lost, string quartets, cantatas, etc. Some of them had been publicly produced in Germany, but no one here would look at them. With orchestral work I had better luck, for that great friend of budding composers, Auguste Manns, produced a

Serenade and an 'Overture to Anthony and Cleopatra' with great artistic success. My friend George Henschel followed Manns' lead—and there was the end of that. The cry being for 'something new' I obliged, but without practical results.

Then I wrote my Mass in D, and thanks indirectly to two women, the Empress Eugénie and Lady Ponsonby, it was at last produced by the Royal Choral Society in 1893 at the Albert Hall. Maurice Baring has told in his Memoirs how my hunting friends rallied round me; and one of them—a gallant horseman but less musical, I believe, than any animal in his stable—was heard remarking to my sister: 'By Jove, Mrs. Charlie, this is slashing stuff!' The execution was fine, the public wildly enthusiastic . . . the Press devastating. True, one voice must have been raised in my favour, for in the 2nd Edition of Grove's Dictionary Mr. Fuller Maitland wrote: 'this work definitely placed the composer *among the most eminent composers of her time*.' But, as happened on another Dead Sea, one just man was not enough to save the situation; and even as Sodom and Gomorrah were given over to destruction, so was I.

This uncompromisingly favourable verdict, pronounced by one of the few English males capable of objective musical judgment—a great musician himself and a great gentleman—has often made me reflect on what might have been the fate of that Mass, not to mention the stimulus to the composer's creative power, had it been written, shall we say, by an Oxford undergraduate, late student of the Royal College of Music? For all too soon I discovered that English music was in the hands of a powerful ring, and that it would be easier for me to scale the walls of Holloway Prison than to get a footing in those nurseries of Choral Art, our provincial Festivals.

All the same I must say that to squash that Mass and relegate it to limbo for 33 years was a triumph of the art

of refusing to see. Will anyone point to the masterpieces of the 'nineties that naturally put its poor nose out of joint? Where are they to-day? And the odd thing is, that though it was obviously a mistake of mine to think that England is Germany, where good work can always get a hearing, still the all-powerful Hubert Parry was among my friends; so too was Sullivan. Yet it never seems to have occurred to either of them that to help a young English talent, even though an outsider, *might* be the duty of those who handle ropes!

It took me a couple of years or more fully to grasp the situation, to realise the utter hopelessness of getting either a second performance of the Mass or a first performance of anything whatsoever. By a fluke I had got past the barrier for an hour and ten minutes, but there was nothing of a fluke about the sequel! Only the other day I unearthed in my loft a cantata I had forgotten the existence of (but my sisters remember it) called 'The Song of Love,' for Soli and Chorus, and on it is scrawled in pencil 'No go! Stanford can't or won't see! Never again will I trouble one of that crew.' I remember his making some wise remarks on orchestration and he wasn't exactly snubby; only devoid of all interest, and wholly indisposed to give me a run through. The date of that opus is 1895, and not a soul knows one note of it; but, 'God's death,' as Queen Elizabeth used to say, if I live it shall be known ere long, if only to illustrate my main argument.

Eventually, as England had no room for me, and as Levi had always declared I had a vocation for music-drama, I turned my thoughts to opera and Germany.

. . . . . .

My story does not concern Germany, so I will only say that I had successes there on the strength of which it was difficult to refuse to perform my second opera, *Der Wald*, at Covent Garden, conductor and performers

being of course Germans. And ever and anon I would waste time and money (and of neither had I a superfluity) in vain endeavours to get admission into the concert world. Once in a blue moon, thanks to incredible efforts and some friendly purse, I would succeed in launching a chamber work, though even this was difficult because the gangway was blocked by nominees of ' The Gang ' (thus the Oligarchy that has always ruled musical England, and may rule it for some years yet, was, and is, familiarly called ; that is why I use the word ' *gangway* '). As for the choral and orchestral worlds, these were inexorably closed to me, except that once I got a chorus performed at Darlington, my hunting brother-in-law's post town ! And on these rare occasions I would sometimes feel a little wave of sympathy flowing between me and the audience, and say to myself ' some of these people know what I am driving at and would like my music if they had a chance.' Alas ! there was no mention of this warmth in the Press, in whose eyes the public is always a negligible factor. (In Germany they call storms of applause ' ein aeusserlicher Erfolg '—a superficial success !) Consequently these little triumphs never came to the ears of concert promoters, who in no case would have taken the faintest interest in one not of the inner circle, let alone a woman.

Sometimes a stray event would renew one's failing courage. For instance, after the Mass I had received an eight-sheet letter from one Mr. J. B. Krall, who was attached, I fancy, to some Northern paper. This unknown admirer analysed my score page by page, knew what that modulation into B minor stood for ; said ' surely you mean Andante, not Adagio at Number 36 ? ' ; said things about the music such as foreigners are capable of feeling—and not ashamed to say, if they do feel them, regardless of your sex. Mr. Krall seemed to know all about the Inner Circle which in those early days I did

not, and foretold exactly what would happen. 'The Mass will be cold-shouldered all right,' he wrote, 'and you'll be squashed for the time being, but don't lose heart—your music will win through in the end.' That letter is still among my treasures. Another time I was extraordinarily heartened by the remark of an old woman in a North Country Parish Church about the wedding anthem I had written for my niece ; 'That music talks to you. It made me want to cry, it did.' Little she guessed that her words would become a talisman, clung to in moments of despair ! Or it was a few words scrawled by Nikisch on a photo he once gave me after conducting some work of mine. . . . Every unrecognised artist—yes ! and every mountaineer—knows all about these little excrescences in the smooth, cruel wall of ice, that just save one from slipping into the abyss. . . .

To go back for a minute to that obscure feeling I spoke of, that between me and the public there was a bond of sympathy. Deep and new perceptions—as a rule very simple ones—come slowly, and it was some years before I tumbled to the truth of this matter; which is, that whereas the Faculty is an all-male body, with tastes, conventions, and laws of its own, the public is built up of both sexes. Half the people present are women, predisposed by nature to understand a woman's talk ; besides which in a concert room there are plenty of wholly unbiassed males, who are quite prepared to applaud any music that appeals to them. Yet, remember, in the past there had been no great women composers, and one had to work through the chill, diffused subconsciously by that thought !

A fact no one seems to realise is, that until about twenty years ago, excluded from the rough and tumble of music life where composers and conductors pick up half their experience and God knows how much stimulus, it was as impossible for a woman to become a great

composer as to become a great mariner. Joan of Arc, miracle tho' she be, is thinkable in the Middle Ages, but a female Lord Nelson seems improbable, even in the year 1928 ! It is chiefly because the evolution of woman as composer is so interesting and important that I am so desperately keen on her being freely admitted into first-class orchestras, and every department of musical life. (We can see about the Navy later on !)

Well ! so things went on for close on twenty years ; in 1909 or thereabouts I was no nearer the goal than I had been in 1889, if anything farther off. And gradually it was borne in upon me that the condescending Press gentlemen, who all this time were damning me with faint praise, had not the very remotest perception of the quality of my work. Which remark serves to introduce the theme of Press criticism in general—a subject I will tackle with that directness which I have claimed as a feminine trait, but I hope without animus.

. . . . .

It is in the nature of things,—and in a chapter entitled ' Catchwords ' I have hazarded a theory that accounts for it—that critics should fall an easier prey to prejudice and preconceived notions than any other section of the Art world. This fact became patent to me in 1878 when Brahms came to Leipzig to conduct his new symphony, the D major. The musical tone of Leipzig was notoriously cold, conservative, and arrogant; on the other hand, Brahms had scant respect for the critical fraternity, and never took pains to disguise his views on this or any other subject. Further, he was not a good conductor and had the knack of rubbing some orchestras up the wrong way ; particularly the Gewandhaus band, whom he found not only conceited, but tepid and sticky in comparison with his beloved Viennese. Thus was the scene set ; but never could I have imagined

anything like the Press ! Such flaws as there are even in the work of the greatest composers were dwelt on and savagely magnified. Of the inspiration, the beauty, *the calibre* of the thing—and that can surely not have escaped them—not one word ; only insistence on dullness, pedantry, and ugliness. It was, of course, a case of prejudice ; of an inherited and quite gratuitous belief in their own superiority, combined with personal dislike of this rude man who was never tired of proclaiming that there was more musical instinct in one Viennese street than in the whole of the German Empire. Now if this sort of thing could happen to Brahms, it may well be imagined what the power of preconceived notions was likely to be in dealing with a case such as mine !

Let me now make a confession ; as regards my own musical judgment, though Heaven knows I do not claim infallibility, I am not modest. Readers of my Memoirs may remember that when Brahms expatiated to Herr von zer Muehlen about certain ' two marvellously musical women in Leipzig,' my friend Lisl, one of the two, was laughed at by me, the other, for being so deeply flattered. And when, two or three years ago, someone pointed out to me that Hermann Levi had once written to a mutual friend ' that little English friend of yours is the most musical temperament (*musikalischste Kopf*) I have ever known except Wagner '—(and let me hastily say Levi did not at that time know one note of my music ; he might not have made that remark if he had !)—when told this, I was pleased my friend should see that encomium, but at the bottom of my mind was (and is) the thought ' no one can tell me anything about my own musicalness.' Hence when I settled down in England, and discovered that the English Press and I worshipped (as we certainly did) different Gods, I was not surprised to find that, with very rare exceptions, they neither understood nor felt drawn towards my work. Now

unsympathetic criticism is of no use to anybody, and it was hard enough to keep up one's courage, faced as I was by closed concert and cathedral doors, without gratuitously depressing myself by reading unpleasant Press notices. In early days, therefore, I came to the conclusion that it was wisest not to read them at all. This habit I now and then broke for a while, as will be seen later, but always came back to it; in the end finally. Germans had taken interest in my work, had even published it, and big German musicians had held out the hand of friendship to me. Here at home, not only would no single English musician give me a helping hand (don't forget that Manns and Henschel, my first friends, were foreigners) but according to the English Press this indifference was amply justified.

In that remarkable book 'Disraeli,' Maurois describes how, at the very outset of his hero's long struggle for the place that was his by right, this alien divined that he would get there, *not thanks to, but in spite of*, the representatives of English political life, although some of them were his friends. Nor was it morbid sensitiveness on his part when he fancied that, even in the eyes of these, his faults were apt to loom larger than his qualities. Thus it was with the white crow now addressing the House—an English composer of the wrong sex, whose life has been spent in furtive hoppings about on the rim of a black, proudly-strutting crowd—occasionally attempting a hurried scuttle in the direction of a crumb, to be remorselessly shoo'd away again. And presently, by way of settling, once for all, the hash of the audacious intruder, an innocent-looking label was issued, gummed with the best gum, and stamped with the Government seal. I was not a composer among composers, but a 'lady composer'; in moments of after-dinner expansiveness, 'our premier lady composer'! As it were the French proverb, 'dans le royaume des aveugles le borgne est roi.'

This label, which must have greatly simplified the task of puzzled striplings called upon to deal judicially with ladylike music such as 'Hey Nonny No' or, say, the Love Scene in 'The Wreckers,' did its work thoroughly. The rest followed as a matter of course, and for years my music was never mentioned without reference to some plagiarised victim—anyone would do, from Haydn to Scriabin. Every other composer had a little band of admirers, prepared to drown with wild plaudits the voice of official disapproval ; asking nothing better than to proclaim their faith in this or that musical journal. I alone had no one, since women, who would probably have been glad to rally round me, have no footing in the Oligarchy or the Press ; on the contrary, at every attempt to get my head above water it was firmly pressed under again, the two fatal words relegating me to the ranks of the negligible. Well may Rutland Boughton write, 'her life has been one long struggle against intolerable, all but overwhelming, odds !' It has ! . . .

I do not know if any of the Magistrates who were dispensing Press justice during those bad years are still on the Bench. But if I say that I am too conscious myself of the power of prejudice, too sympathetically aware of what the horrors and difficulties of a critic's job must be—and perhaps also too sure of myself—to bear malice, shall I be believed ? Certainly the black crows cannot be exonerated from all blame, but I don't think there was much wrong with them except cataract and oto-sclerotis ; sad but inevitable results of chronic, if subconscious, male arrogance !

IV

Meanwhile, whatever the English Press was saying, whatever English conductors and organisers of concert schemes were *not* doing, foreigners were taking a surprisingly different line.

In 1908—and mind, the Elgar boom had been going strong for some few years then—I embarked on the only French enterprise of my life, and gave a chamber-music concert in Paris. The works performed included my Chamber Music Songs and my String Quartet in E minor—both almost unknown in England and never played unless at a concert organised by me.

Here are significant comments by two of the most highly honoured among French critics, the italics being mine :

'This revelation of a *real musical personality* of English race is all the more remarkable in that *up to now the compatriots of Purcell have shown nothing but eminent gifts of assimilation*; these songs or poems are of a charming melodic invention, of a strongly marked yet free rhythm, intense in colouring and full of the most exquisite poetry. "La Danse," which was encored, illustrates one of the composer's most precious qualities, an unfailing picturesqueness, whether in the treatment of things joyous, or, as in "Odelette," of the pangs and languors of love, all of which moods are depicted by her with equal intensity. It would not surprise us if the *originality of her work* gives a new direction to the art of her country.'—Robert Brüssel, *Figaro*, June 6, 1908.

'This English nation, so strong, so alive, so original, produces the most colourless, "fade" music in the world; in short, the music least typical of the race. Most of it is of the Mendelssohn, Gounod, or Brahms school; some have leaned latterly towards Debussy and our younger school; but up to now *it is impossible to affirm that English composers have produced music in which one can distinguish the expression of an original feeling; with one sole exception, Ethel Smyth!*

'I do not mean to say her music is free from all foreign influence; in the delicate, seductively vital works, interpenetrated with poetic grace, which we have just heard, the melodic invention seems almost meridional, even "mediterranic" to use Nietzsche's term; we find there even a delicate flavour of Hellenism—a new instance of the subtle cosmopolitanism that has ever characterised high English culture in poetry and painting. But these elements are blended in a *personality so intense and individual* as to fuse and re-cast

them all ; and the result is music that *only an English composer could have written*, and that marks a *new departure in English music life.*'—Pierre Lalo, *Le Temps*, June 20, 1908.

Or turn to Richard Batka's *Kritiken und Skizzen*, where an examination of the vocal score of 'The Wreckers' concludes thus :

'The impression this music gives one can be thus summed up ; that England, which in Purcell's time was one of the great musical peoples, is once more destined to play an "obligato" part in the World-Symphony.'

Or take this. In the autumn of 1911 I was in Vienna, where at last I found a publisher willing, in spite of the label, to take up my music, and where two choruses of mine were produced. The one here referred to is 'Hey Nonny No' :

'In its *vastness, its overwhelming strength, this amazing work* sums up, both as to text and setting, all the hunger and intoxication of life, all the contemptuous braving of death characteristic of the Elizabethan epoch. *Every fibre in this composer's being is music—music that seems to have streamed through the deepest part of her country's soul* and absorbed all its peculiar atmosphere and fascination ; the sea with its salt breath, the hard wind blowing over white chalk cliffs, the velvet dunes, the steel-like quality of those strange islanders—so straightforward and yet so full of secret passions—*all this is in her music* steeped in the peculiar softness and sentiment of her race.'—*Neue Freie Presse*, April 6, 1911.

Finally in the Austrian Musical Review, *Der Merker*, of December, 1912, Bruno Walter wrote an article on my work, part of which was quoted in *The Times*. We see his deeply philosophical mind busy with the sex question ; but with what intelligence he ponders it, to brush it aside as irrelevant up to the present moment !

'I consider Ethel Smyth a composer of quite special significance, who is *certain of a permanent place in musical history. Genuine musical productivity* is so rare, that we are entitled to

ask whether the impression of *originality* created by these compositions is not attributable to their femininity? But though our ears are trained to immediately detect national differences in music, we are too inexperienced to detect sex characteristics. If we had a hundred female composers we might be able to establish a distinction between male and female music. But though, above all else, her music is *English* through and through, personally I am convinced that its thematic charm proceeds essentially from the composer's womanhood. The sex question is however comparatively unimportant *in the presence of a talent so strong, thematic invention so original, a temperament so deep and warm.* This I was glad to see recognised by her striking success with the Viennese public, and I believe that her work is destined *permanently to succeed*, though, as always happens with *true originality*, its recognition will only come gradually and *in the teeth of opposition.*'—*The Times*, December 23, 1912.

All this makes curious reading. 'In the teeth of opposition,' says Walter; but . . . a label has no teeth! And then the touching belief expressed by two of these absurd foreigners that my music would surely influence the art of my country! Why, a nun walled up alive in her convent would have a better chance of exercising influence than manuscripts in a cupboard. But remembering my own remark about women not being afraid of melody, it thrills me to re-read what Walter has to say on that point; and Lalo too.

I have remarked that this chapter is mainly for women's reading, and as I write I am thinking of you, O composer I will not name here lest I make enemies for you—and of a work of yours that recently knocked out every other item on a certain novelty programme, and was declared next day by an eminent critic to qualify you for 'a prominent place among our women composers'! Remember that while I was being treated with like contemptuous patronage by English critics, foreigners were judging me as above, though whether they would have written thus (except, of course, Walter)

had I been their own country-woman, who shall say? We women are only too aware of male weaknesses!

. . . . . .

I must not forget to say that in 1908, and in the same week as my Paris venture, I gave a 'Wreckers' concert at the Queen's Hall which Nikisch conducted, and which I think made a deep impression on the public. But my own recollections of this time and the following months are blurred, for about ten days after that concert my friend 'H. B.' died. He had travelled from Italy in order to be present, but it was obvious to all who saw him that night that the end was not far off. I am always glad to think he believed that now, at last, I was out of the wood. I thought so too. But we were mistaken. As far as tangible results went, I mean as regards sweeping me and my work once for all into the main stream of English music, that concert might never have taken place.

. . . . . .

Meanwhile there was one break in the bad weather, or rather a sort of false dawn. Early in 1911, being still without a publisher (for who will print third-rate music that is never performed?) I threw down a challenge and gave a choral and orchestral concert of my own works which was such a success that it was repeated a month later. Mr. Thomas Beecham, as he was then, had most kindly promised to conduct for me, but, when the time came, it turned out that he had forgotten all about it and was in Italy. There was neither time nor money to get hold of someone else (Henry Wood was still unknown to me) . . . and thus began my career as conductor—at the pistol's mouth, so to speak.

This time I seemed to have got into the open at last, for the Press was really bowled over. Not even of their beloved Elgar have they said more glorious things, words

like ' strong,' ' magnificent,' ' inspired,' ' original,' etc., being bandied about so freely that I had excerpts printed and sent round to the old, old addresses. During the years I have been describing I must have spent a small fortune travelling about the United Kingdom with my manuscripts, in the vain hope of awaking someone's interest, but this time I had really enthusiastic backers in the Press . . . and hope dies hard !

Alas ! there was not the very faintest repercussion in the Concert Halls of Albion, and I should like to know if anyone will pretend that such a thing could possibly have happened, had I been a man ? It was simply a case of Pharoah hardening his heart, perhaps unconsciously, against the whole female tribe as represented by this specimen of it, whom the *Daily Telegraph* (June 30) described as 'one of the strongest and most creative musicians of the day,' and whom, according to the *Morning Post* (April 3) ' the depth of her thought places on a higher plane than any of her contemporaries.' As I had always suspected, not the Press but *fellow musicians*, in a word conductors, were the real difficulty ; I could lead them, at considerable expense, to the water, but drink they would not. Is it surprising then, that, as if to make up for previous indiscretion, the Press relapsed heavily, to a man—exactly the psychological revulsion I had foreseen would happen once the MS. of my Mass was out of Levi's reach ! Mrs. Poyser has remarked that though a dog will ' sit up ' for a short time, he will soon be down on all fours again. In less than no time the Press was once more planted on four reliable legs of contemptuous patronage, and the label, which had worked loose for a few blessed moments, was firmly pasted down again.

But now, after that concert, the best music friend I ever had, Henry Wood, stepped on to the scene, and

began of his own accord to take me up. Not without hindrances, however, for I remember Sir Edgar Speyer remarking with elegant directness that the inclusion of my name on a programme lessened its drawing power, so he hoped all my friends would take tickets. By and by Dan Godfrey followed Henry Wood's suit and later still Thomas Beecham, who was the first conductor to take my music abroad—a fact I shall never forget. But the rest of the music world, including the L.S.O. *whom I had engaged for all my concerts*, seemed to be under a vow to leave ' our leading lady composer ' as I was now definitely styled (at all hours of the day) severely alone. Once in later years, moved by my appeals to their better nature, the L.S.O. did include a work of mine (of which, *at request*, I had presented them the score and parts for their library) in a certain programme, pending the approval of their conductor, who was then abroad. Now there is a certain type of male to whom my mother, emphatically a man's woman, used in moments of irritation to apply the term ' that great he-man '—a term I now find exceedingly funny though it used rather to shock me. Such a one might, or might not, think the proper place for a woman is a man's knee, but I don't think he would like to see her in the ranks of composers. To this type belonged the conductor in question; my name was removed from that programme, and the L.S.O. have practised a like abstention ever since. The Philharmonic Society similarly ignored my existence, except once when threatened by a wealthy female guarantor. After the war they urged in a very handsome letter my qualifications for membership, and were good enough to pocket my eight guineas, but declined to commit themselves further. For Landon Ronald and Albert Coates I have never existed musically, but both are ever lavish of endearing epithets to ' the ladies '—an amiable habit observed even towards those who have passed

the canonical age. And that shows a very civil and kindly spirit in these gentlemen. As for the London String Quartet (to whom I dedicated my best Chamber work), the Three Choirs . . . Leeds . . . as well crave admission to the Royal Yacht Squadron on the strength of having paddled a canoe on the Basingstoke Canal. In fact it was checkmate.

V

In the autumn of 1911 I realised for the first time what 'Votes for Women' meant, and it seemed to me that all self-respecting women, especially such as occupied any place, be it ever so humble, in the public eye, were called upon to take action. Nothing is less compatible with musical creation than politics of any kind, and the peculiarly devastating effect of a struggle such as the militants were engaged in—and this was the party, of course, to which I allied myself—needs no stressing. There was only one thing to be done; it would spell ruin to the painfully sown little musical crop, but other women were giving life itself. . . . I determined to devote two years of my life to the Cause, and afterwards return to my own job; which programme was carried out to the letter.

The story of those two years is such a very other story that I will not touch on it here, but go straight to the winter 1913–14, which was spent in Egypt. There I wrote 'The Bosun's Mate' and incidentally learned that Henry Wood was studying two Choruses of mine for the Norwich Festival of 1914—the very two he produced there last autumn! This was a huge step forward. On the way home two big events were fixed up, the *première* of 'The Bosun' at Frankfurt and the yearned-for ideal performance of 'The Wreckers' under Walter at Munich. I rather hoped these happenings (timed for February and March 1915) *might*

make some slight impression in the land of my birth, but . . . a month after those contracts were signed war broke out.

Up to now this record has dealt solely with the concert room experiences of an English 'lady composer' in England during some thirty years. Just to round the story off, I will speak of Opera, but only in passing, as that has been done elsewhere in this book.

I think I must some day write a paper called 'The Wrecks of the Wreckers.' It is a strange story that makes one think there may be something in a name. To begin with, Nikisch accepted it in 1905 at first sight, for its *première* at Leipzig ; two months afterwards he was dismissed by a new and economical Town Council. Exactly the same thing happened at Vienna a year later when Mahler was driven away. The war knocked Walter's intended performance at Munich on the head. And, finally, at Covent Garden it was killed by under-rehearsal in two blows, a cruel interval of four weeks and a change of conductor between each blow.

In my hand I have an article written by the celebrated art critic Richard Specht of Vienna, in connection with the projected performance at Munich. I think I will have that article published some day. Reading it, I reflect with stupefaction that no one except the great singer Fassbender, Mottl's widow—one broken to opera from childhood upwards—seemed to realise what order of work was going down, scene by scene . . . or are these Germans mad ? Well, as things are now it can never be done in England. So much for 'The Wreckers.'

Owing to the war the Frankfort *première* of 'The Bosun' of course fell through, but Thomas Beecham produced it during one of his London seasons, and a splendid cast did he provide for me, though, thanks to the amateurish ineptitudes of his scenic constructor, the

work never came into its own till mounted in an appropriately simple Jacobs style at the Old Vic. You cannot pull off what Germans call a 'Conversazions-Oper' when the 'conversation,' in other words the laying-out of the plot, takes place on a tea-tray in the sky at the extreme back of the stage. Very picturesque and stylish, no doubt, but not practical; for in works of this kind not a word of the dialogue, not a shade of facial expression should be missed.

I have spoken in another chapter of my other non-grand operas. Unless you are in a certain set, you have to organise a push yourself if anything is to happen. And as I am sick of doing that, in all probability none of these works will ever be mounted again.

. . . . . .

After the war a new generation of composers arrived (males arrive in this country about their fortieth year, but *when they arrive they come to stay!*). Also a new race of critics sprang up; further, women had now become a competitive industrial force and had to be sat upon. Owing to these and other influences, although I have followed the receipt given to Alice by the Red Queen for keeping in the same place, and have been running hard all the time, I rather doubt whether the heights of English Press appreciation attained by me in the year 1911 will be reached again in my lifetime! Nevertheless, 1919 brought about the turn in my tide, for in that year I published 'Impressions that Remained,' with the result that people began asking about the author's music. And ever more insistently was I urged by Henry Wood to conduct my own works, regardless of an of course disapproving Press. According to him some composers can get a rendering nearer their intention than many a 'real' conductor; among these he classed me, and I took his word for it. But his main point was that

the public has curiosity as regards its music makers, and that I should be invited here and there to conduct. He was a true prophet and by degrees the boycott yielded. And let me not forget to say that all my life, whether at home or abroad, orchestras have been adorable to me, more especially since I took up conducting. In early days I made many slips, but how they saw me through ! Good comrades, they always give me their best, though acquainted, no doubt, with my views on the subject of women orchestral players. As composer, too, one is safe and happy with these experts across whose desks a whole music civilisation has flitted, and who know us all for what we are. Yes ! whoever else has seen to it that my life has not been a bed of roses, it was neither orchestras nor choruses.

The great event was the revival of the Mass in 1924. I had almost forgotten its existence, but, when writing my Memoirs, looked it up, and found to my amazement that I should improbably do anything better. I then wrote to Messrs. Novello about it, and their inexorable reply, ' We fear your Mass is practically dead,' was the needed tonic. Henry Wood persuaded the Birmingham Festival Choir Committee to revive it, and when obliged, owing to pressure of work, to resign the Birmingham conductorship, his successor, Mr. Adrian Boult, willingly shouldered the legacy and brought about a splendid performance. Since then various productions have taken place ; and thanks to Sir Herbert Brewer—and indirectly to Sir Hugh Allen, new and powerful friend of recent years—this year, if I live, my life's dream of hearing it *in its entirety* in the place it was written for, an Anglican Cathedral, will be realised.

In connection with this revival I got a remarkable letter I am about to quote. Not that one dreams of roping in recalcitrants who are prepared to defend the burying alive of that Mass for over thirty years. We

know what the opinion is of a man convinced against his will, and some conversions are absolutely unthinkable. Does anyone believe, for instance, that all Ninon de l'Enclos' lovers, risen from the dead and personally ushered by an archangel into Mr. Gladstone's study, could have persuaded that stern moralist that Ninon was as safely housed in heaven as any saint in the calendar? Of course not! If, then, I want to quote this most kind and generous letter, it is because certain remarks I have yet to make about NATURAL SEX-ANTAGONISM are of such a startling character that men might be tempted to brush them aside with a smile, and perhaps a touch of indignation. Well, let them read this letter from one of the deepest and boldest thinkers alive, and confess that no controversialist could desire a more complete confirmation of the views that will be presented by and by.

'You are totally and diametrically wrong in imagining that you have suffered from a prejudice against feminine music. On the contrary you have been almost extinguished by the dread of *masculine* music. . . . It was your music that cured me for ever of the old delusion that women could not do man's work in art and all other things. But for you I might not have been able to tackle St. Joan who has floored every previous playwright. . . . Your Mass will stand up in the biggest company! Magnificent!

'Yours, dear big brother,
'G. BERNARD SHAW.'

Thus an Irishman! I wonder how many Englishmen, even if they felt like this, would record their feelings in black and white? But then my point is—and that thought has always checked uprising bitterness—that an average Englishman couldn't feel like this! As a certain *grande-dame* of the old school, whose aristocratic indifference to the exact wording of vulgar proverbs was

the delight of her friends, would frequently remark : 'I always say, none so deaf as those who *can't hear.*' Very true.

. . . . . .

And now, the musical contours of this sketch map of a lifetime having been brought more or less up to date, follows a page or two which I would prefer to leave unwritten. On the other hand, ought the kind of man who gives way to a certain kind of weakness be allowed to go on thinking that we don't see it ? As a particularly delightful lady I know said to me the other day : 'It's no good them fellers actin' like sweeps and then askin' us women *to kindly not observe it.*' It is a form of weakness we of the Suffrage knew only too well, and personally I have been up against it all my life in music ; but it is rather sad to think it flourishes, wholly unsuspected by normal men of goodwill, even up to present times. For twist and turn things as you will, the following instances, that I chance to remember because they happened recently, are rather pregnant.

1923. E. S. having been made D.B.E. *for music*, the Leeds Festival Committee, who had turned down the Mass thirty years ago ('Who are you, pray, young woman ?), seem willing to entertain the idea of doing it now. Knowing Albert Coates, E. S. proposes to substitute two short choruses instead. A. C. apparently quite willing : ('Of course I'll back you, darling'). During following ten months choruses secretly shouldered out of the scheme every six weeks or so. E. S., informed by watchers on spot, circumvents the enemy each time. Committee puzzled, perturbed, but powerless ; festivals cannot be run unless you give the conductor a free hand.

Eventually *one* chorus only is pulled off, which E. S. had to conduct herself ; a rough performance, for that was the *only item in the scheme* that never got a 'combined

choir' choral rehearsal. Singers enthusiastic; public ditto. Costs to E. S. of ten months' campaign, including letters, telegrams, railway tickets, hotels, etc., from £10 to £15. *Query*: Why this opposition to giving six minutes in a huge scheme to 'our leading woman composer,' *recently thought worthy of some distinction*?

1925. First performance of new opera 'Entente Cordiale' at Royal College of Music. Terrific effort; result brilliant. Next month in *R.C.M. Journal* just a bare mention of production; nothing more. E. S. writes to Sir Hugh Allen, as to one with whom she is on chaffing terms, 'This is rather too much of a good thing, even in your man-ridden establishment.' Sir H. much perturbed. The Editor, Mr. Herbert Howells, explains to him that the *Journal's system* is never to make comments. Sir H. much relieved. By next post he receives from E. S. a back number of the *Journal* containing ten pages of ecstatic eulogy of 'our Dr. Vaughan Williams's' opera! Tableau!! E. S. reflects bitterly that, at his charmingly worded request, she had made that young Editor a present of an article for which any daily would have paid her well.

1926. First *public* performance, during the Bristol Opera Season, of 'Entente Cordiale,' a work, mind, written, composed, conducted, and practically produced by an English musician. Great success. Knowing the Editor to be a real friend and appreciator, E. S. for once glances at *The British Musician's* report of the Opera Season, which however was not written by the Editor. Every work performed is kindly and fairly commented on; only one is merely named *without any comment whatsoever*: 'Entente Cordiale.'

My final anecdote, most incomprehensible of all, shall be told in the first person.

A musical authority recently wrote a book on English Opera, and as his brother is a good friend of mine, I was

surprised at not getting a copy. But this surprise evaporated when I heard that in this book there is not the faintest mention of myself and the five operas of mine that have been produced since 1900 in England ! Rather a feat of omission, surely ! Now I am so used to this sort of thing, (as I remarked before) that although I could not help condoling with the author on the infirm state of his memory, this incident did not cloud for more than a passing moment the friendly feeling I have for a gentleman, whose views, though I know them but slightly, seem to me sound, and who has not only vision but a certain ardour that is sympathetic to me. So far, too, he possesses what most men so strangely lack, moral courage, and he will be a good influence in our music life if only his moral independence remains intact. And it is good in these days of art-murdering hustle to light on the following remark about the Brahms-Clara Schumann correspondence, 'Their attitude towards the music they did like was very wonderful, very lovely, and one wishes that a little more of this spirit were discoverable in our musical life ; this deep conviction, this dignified enthusiasm.'

Much can be forgiven to a man who feels thus about music. All the same, as regards that very odd omission in his book on English Opera, one cannot help asking, as in the case of the Mass : where is the vast pyramid of British Opera Scores among which mine slipped, for the moment, out of sight ? . . .

But enough. This temptation to pretend that women are non-existent musically, to ignore or damp down our poor little triumphs such as they are, is a microbe that will flourish comfortably, though perhaps surreptitiously, in the male organism, till there are enough women composers for it to die a natural death. Whereupon men will forget it ever existed. Have they not already forgotten their frenzied opposition to 'Votes for Women' ? . . .

VI

To turn away from this unattractive section of my subject, and before attempting to sum up the whole question of the mutual angle of the sexes in these new times of ours, let the gay subject of Honours now be tackled ; and since every normal man, woman, or child loves dressing up, I think we must all allow that being given a degree or a decoration is not only a gratifying but an enchanting experience.

My first honour (as I think I have related somewhere) came to me through lawn tennis. In the 'nineties I used to play tennis a good deal in the Quadrangle of Durham Castle with the nephews of a shy bachelor Canon who liked to watch our games from behind the curtain of his study window. When, in 1910, the Durham University decided to confer Degrees on women, this Canon, who was musical, and had followed my career, such as it was, with kindly interest, suggested my name—so I learned later ; and I was invested in Dr. Walford Davies's gown ; a fact to reflect on which gives me quite particular pleasure !

The second honour I owe to golf. In 1922 there was a rumpus at the Woking Golf Club, which is really a man's club, women being what is called ' temporary members,' though treated with greatest consideration. Certain ladies had not only committed irregularities as to our starting hours on Saturdays and Sundays, but would persist in using a certain short cut from the General Rooms to their own quarters which we are requested *not* to use, because it leads past the Men's Dressing Rooms. Once or twice the Secretary had remonstrated with our Captain, but the delinquents persisted in their shocking conduct, and it came round to me through a golfing man-friend that there was some talk of our being forbidden to play at all during week-ends.

This was a terrible thought. Getting wind of an impending meeting of the Ladies' Committee, I, who had never done such a thing before, turned up and made a speech, in which the short cut business was specially dwelt on. For if, as I confessed to my colleagues, people who have lived much abroad are seldom squeamish about these matters, none could doubt, given the modesty of the British male, that herein lay our chief crime. The meeting broke up in laughter, but I got my resolution carried (three valiant 'noes' still clinging passionately, in theory at least, to the short cut), and the crisis was over.

Now many of our members are married women, and no doubt the tenour of my remarks was passed on to husbands. Anyhow when Lord Riddell, a distinguished London member with strong literary proclivities, came down to spend a week-end with his friend Mr. Stuart Paton, known as the Mussolini of the Woking Golf Club, he expressed a gratifying wish to make the acquaintance of the author of 'Impressions that Remained.' And a twinkle in the visitor's eye, when he referred to a recent tumultuous meeting in the Ladies' Room, showed that he was well posted in the inner history of the dispute.

Soon after this New Year came round. At that time Lord Riddell and our then Premier, Mr. Lloyd George, were inseparables, and if the question of Honours turned up, ('We've got to do something for the women!') and if my name was eventually put before His Majesty as one suitable for the letters D.B.E. after it, I am morally certain it was thanks to that scene at the Woking Golf Club.

As regards the final honour conferred upon me by the University of Oxford at the Encaenia, June 23, 1926, I believe the present Chancellor is more literary than musical. And since I learned that my inclusion in the

list was his own, unprompted idea, I cannot help hoping, just to complete the tale, that if it is now my privilege to wear the handsomest of all the Oxford doctors' gowns, my books may have been a contributory cause. *D. Mus.*, *via* tennis, golf, and literature, is a splendid and quite normal instance of causation as it really is, though not perhaps as it should be !

I wish it were possible to end on this cheerful and frivolous note, for in the symphony of life frivolity and cheerfulness are as indispensable elements as any others. But the heart of my subject-matter is grave enough, in that I am trying to indicate a danger spot, a germ that should be watched lest it breed disease, though personally it only concerns the writer as manifesting itself on the musical scene—where, too, it is probably more active than anywhere else.

One advantage of the lapse of years is, that people have had time to find out what sort of person you are; particularly if on one field, at least, you have free access to the public. A woman whose friendships with men are so numerous and so warm as mine is unlikely to be taken for a fanatical feminist or a confirmed hater of men. Nor have I any axe to grind, for at this hour of the day the battle of my life is practically over, and I neither know nor care if it has been lost or won. On the other hand, by virtue of musical equipment and such share of intelligence as I possess, I think I have some right to speak out straight to the men in whose power it lies to help or hinder—though not, thank God, permanently to hold up—the women of to-day and to-morrow in music.

What the war did for my sex was to key us up to a pitch hitherto undreamed of. With the new possibilities that loomed into sight, women gauged their own strength and began to find a new savour in life. Now,

if, on the contrary, the war produced in men, even in non-fighters, a certain lassitude of spirit—(I am not speaking of first rank intelligences, of the men who are making new records in research and applied science, but of the ordinary ruck)—if, as we women sometimes fancy, this is the case, here you have a possible explanation of the strange gulf that seems to have opened up between the sexes. At times it is hard for us to understand each other, and the other day I found myself wondering whether I and a man I was corresponding with belong to the same planet.

Though a musician of eminence, we have never met; but his letters, so limpid in their sincerity, so touching in their distress, were a joy to receive. He had begun by saying that a man's natural instinct is to love a few women passionately and hate the sex collectively; whereas a woman, whether she hates men collectively or not, is obviously meant to love one man only. (!) At this point I protested that to many women the ideal would be a new man every couple of years or so, but he rightly brushed aside this heresy as a joke, and went on to say that nothing horrified him more than the sight of thousands of young women daily hurrying forth in trains and buses to 'their business of competition with men.' How degrading to womanhood, how destructive of such respect and chivalry as still lingers in the male heart!

My replies of course underlined the facts that (1) women believe in work, whether as inducer of happiness or producer of a competence; (2) that if they thereby forfeit man's respect, so much the worse for men, for on the contrary their own self-respect flourishes on work; (3) that whether they like it or not, thanks to the wars that male pride and muddling have brought on the world, women, now the more numerous sex, are *obliged* to work!

And now comes the point of my story. Baffled, bewildered, unhappy, my correspondent eventually wrote, that all he could suggest was the building up of some sort of State Fund wherewith all female babies should be endowed, and women saved from the necessity of 'this degrading competition with men.' He did not seem to anticipate any objection on our part to this arrangement, (perhaps we were not to be consulted?) but quite allowed the idea might be unrealisable. If so, he wished to God someone would hit on a better one.

Now I communicated these views to certain of my men friends, and although some laughed, it was quite evident that this is more or less how they secretly felt themselves. One or two were openly in sympathy—in affectionate, regretful sympathy—with my correspondent's ideas, and my old friend Lord Ernle who is not afraid of blurting out any truth whatsoever exclaimed: 'Oh, what a *splendid* fellow!'

Joking apart, I seriously believe, that although Time is delving parallels in the beauty of the all-male brow, in other words though men are perhaps feeling worried about their position, many of them are still clinging to John Milton-*cum*-Turveydrop ideas about 'Wooman, lovely Wooman.' On the other hand, facing them, ranked up against them, is a still larger mass of English women, prepared to die in a ditch rather than be worshipped in a niche (the couplet was involuntary but it may stand). These are the YOUNG GUARD, whose mouthpiece my age and my story has fated me to become, and in no European country is there a body of women more determined to take a hand in the tidying up of the world, to express its own soul in every way, whether by action, as the word is generally understood, or in the regions of spiritual creation and adventure, than these Englishwomen.

What, then, is to be done?

VII

Considering the answer to this question, it becomes obvious that the hardest part of the joint task of readjustment falls on men, who are called upon to reckon with an on-coming flood that can no more be dammed (except of course with m-n) than the rising sap of Spring can be driven down into the ground again. And if you will believe (I am speaking to men) that there is neither irony nor offensive condescension behind my words and allow me to utter them, I have genuine sympathy with your case. But I do wish that in your own interest you would abandon the futile policy of building barriers against the Young Guard. It will break through in spite of you, and not being of an age to make allowances for hoary habits of mind, will despise you more than you deserve. Which is so very unnecessary and such a pity.

On most other fields, all but Die-Hards have grasped this ; but unfortunately, the past of music being what it is, this particular world is practically given over to Die-hardism. Of course it is only natural that up to now conductors, organists, chorus-masters and such like should be men, though I wouldn't count on that state of things lasting for ever, if I were you ! But inasmuch as the number of women who become J.P.'s, County Councillors, Mayors, and what not, is increasing daily, I do hope soon to see them playing a prominent part on Musical Committees, councils, and other places where the all-male spirit has hitherto pursued its course unhindered, to the defraudment of that bi-sexual crowd the public, and of women artists.

But where that spirit has above all worked devastatingly is in the Press.

A pulpit is always a demoralising place, and a musical critic's Pope, his Editor, has probably rather less know-

ledge of music than he of the Vatican of theology ; which may partly account for the notoriously low level of musical criticism all the world over in comparison to musical culture in general. But I believe the chief reason to be that, as male monopoly, it is necessarily sterile. And if literary criticism is on a higher level (which it is) I attribute it to the fact that women write and review books as freely as men ; thus you get the blue and the white papers together and the resultant Seidlitz fizz. Of course the souls of all great creative artists are woven of masculine and feminine strands. But critics are not creative ; they are just ordinary good fellows who can write decently and have a certain taste—or sometimes an uncertain taste—for music. I am thinking of a connection of mine, now on a Northern paper. In the Mess he used to pick out tunes with one finger and even vamp up accompaniments of the kind my friend Miss E. Œ. Somerville calls ' the 3 chord trick.' But he was not very good at that trick, and the three chords had a wild time of it. Soon after the war I met him, and, informed by him of his new vocation, could not help laughing in his face. Whereupon he said rather huffily : ' Well, I've got to earn my living somehow.' I believe he is a great swell now, and has perhaps already taken his revenge.

On the subject of criticism in general a celebrated French critic, endowed with superb ironical insight, once remarked (I quote from memory but I think accurately) : ' Reviewing a new play, we of the tribe owe it to ourselves, firstly, to test it by some theory of our own, regardless of what the author's aim may have been, and then to grumble because this play is *not some quite other play*.'

Whether or no the withers of our musical critics, who are reported to be honest and inspired by a wish to be fair, are wrung by this Frenchman's remark I

cannot tell, being debarred from reading that part of the newspapers by a constitutional and growing dislike to discussion on sacred subjects, such as music and religion, unless, very rarely, with some personal friend whose soul is in tune with mine though ideas may diverge. Also I agree with Dr. Johnson who says it is the opinion of the man in the street (the people I call the Ignorantsia) that signifies in the end—not that of the experts. And indeed, as 'expert' myself, I seldom visit a concert hall without picking up hints from the audience.

Thus it happens that I know little or nothing about our Press, but the other day I came upon a most amusing letter in a provincial paper, signed 'Music Lover,' in which the writer complained that 'critics are morbidly concerned with each other's views' (of course I at once thought of Sir Walter Raleigh's dons) and 'are further under some mysterious obligation to work in respectful allusions to Mr. Ernest Newman!' If this is true (so few things are) I rather regret it; for, according to report, that witty man, that past master of the art of writing, has not a good word to throw at a dog nowadays. And if one thinks of the millions of concerts he has sat through in his time, who shall blame him? But unfortunately a moth-like habit of picking holes too often results in loss of power to admire, and that is the worst thing that can befall any of us. So I hope Mr. Newman will not lead his admirers too far down that road.

There is however one critic whose articles I always devour, whether about music, literature, or the cinema, and it really is not my fault that she happens to be a woman. No don-like respect for her colleagues about Christopher St. John—not even for Mr. Newman! She just walks straight up to the object of her attention, tries to find out what its fashioner is driving at, and

records her impressions in the strong, nervous, original English that goes with such a mind. I am acquainted with no more typical instance of a first-line female intelligence and how it works. All musicians who know her writing are furious that she is not on the Daily Press . . . yet, I don't know ; I should hate to see that fine, keen blade blunted ! Christopher St. John is of course another case of ' white-crow ' ; otherwise the all-maleism of our musical Press is undiluted. Which thing being so, the following observations are perhaps not uncalled for.

I began this study by drawing attention to the extreme energy that has ever characterised exceptional women, and which nowadays, thanks to the war, runs in the veins of the whole present female generation. Now where this flood of vitality informs a woman's work—that of Mrs. Swynnerton for instance—it will possibly rasp the nerves of certain men, and quite infallibly those of the Musical Faculty. For that lassitude we women seem to feel in the other sex must lie extra heavily on the spirit of community dwellers,—people whom their job divorces from intellectual fellowship with women. When G. B. S. said I had been nearly extinguished because my work was too ' virile ' for the Faculty, he meant just that—an absence of a certain ' er-er-er ' element which I think men find soothing in each other. I find it rather soothing myself, but not all the time and nothing but that. Anyhow this much is certain ; you won't get it from women.[1]

Perhaps what men want is a banana, and woman's soul is possibly more like a grape fruit or an orange, and sets their teeth on edge. But is that the fault of the fruit or of the teeth ? In any case, as that soul can no

[1] I see that an Englishwoman has won, with ease, the International Typing Competition, an instance of terrific energy and concentration ; the exact reverse of ' er-er-er.'

longer be ignored or squashed, on the contrary is an ingredient bound to flavour every dish at the banquet of life to an ever-increasing extent, what I would like, in all friendliness, to put to men is this.

If Mrs. Doctor Fell and all her works are antipathetic to you, if her energy and directness get on your nerves, may not the blame lie with you? A stranger, unbroken to my ways about Press notices, blurted out the other day that some gentleman had been complaining of some 'flaw' that runs through all my work. What if the flaw is in him? What if all this restiveness against woman's spirit indicates a certain deficiency in men—a deficiency I never yet heard made an occasion for boasting or looked on as a sign of superiority; I mean a certain spiritual impotence that cuts these men off from healthy intercourse with the other sex, and limits them to the solitary pleasure of commune with their own spirit?

I do not expect men to embrace what is possibly a new and not quite palatable idea with passion and despatch, but what I do beg of them, meanwhile, is to try and get rid of a certain note of patronage as regards women, in matters artistic, that has been abandoned on other fields as no longer rhyming with the facts of modern life. And if you ask 'what pray about composers?' . . . well, I have explained farther back that, up to recent times, owing to our total exclusion from music-life, it was almost as impossible to grow a big woman composer as to raise a female Lord Nelson—I might have added 'to raise her in the heart of Central Africa.' Meanwhile, given the fact that in spite of every handicap—and in such an amazingly short span of years too—women have jumped to the front rank in science, literature, administration, exploration, commerce, Empire building and so on, it seems improbable, doesn't it, that they will fail to make good as musical creators? I daresay there are masses of

young ones coming along now; invisible, unnoted behind the mists of prejudice, patronage, and starved opportunity that men are still able to conjure up between us and a place in the sun. But when their hour comes, given the spirit that walks in with them wherever they penetrate, it will be a wonderful hour.

Why then, O men, go on assuming, as you had some right to do thirty or forty years ago, that whenever a woman's music is in question, a little splashing about with a paste brush and a packet of 'woman-composer' labels will meet the case? Is this not rather 'paltry,' as the nurse said when told that the French for *yes* is *wee*? And if you say 'O, when real good work comes along we shall recognise it all right,' let me remind you, fellow countrymen—and you, fellow countrywomen never forget the fact—that while those Germans and Frenchmen quoted above were writing as they did, while an Austrian critic was saying that 'The Wreckers' was the most violent manifestation of the soul of England he had ever come across, except *King Lear*; while Walter and Nikisch were plotting to produce that same work; while G. B. S. was harbouring the reflections that, twenty years later, became the core of that letter of his about the Mass; what *you* had settled among yourselves was that woman is merely an imitative being, incapable of strong original work and therefore unfit to enter the lists and run side by side with yourselves.

Why, for instance, is there no mention, in the new 'Grove,' of Dorothy Howell, composer and Professor at the Royal Academy of Music? Is it because she has no 's' to her name? (My friend Howells of the *R.M.C. Journal* incident has, I see, two columns.) By the time yet another edition of the Dictionary appears, to use the language of Mr. Flurry Knox you'd be looking at a chicken a long while before you'd think of Dorothy Howell. Is this to be another Swynnerton case? Do

women not count till they are well past the Grand Climacteric ? . . .

Living outside the turmoil of music life, I do not know exactly what Olympians mould its destinies (though I know a lot of moulding goes on) nor what their various ramifications may be, their provincial organisations, their Press and so forth. But to all these I would suggest, that if a woman's work is good enough, it should occasionally take the place of one of those exceedingly mediocre compositions by English males that so often figure in programmes. And, to pass to the wider question of music in general, how comes it that so few men of influence make *all* the good music raised in this country their concern, which is the sound principle of Henry Wood and one or two others, instead of only that wrought by a chosen few ? The pocket borough system was swept out of politics decades ago, but that spirit lingers on in our music life ; and though the curses against the Gang are not loud, for no one likes to quarrel openly with his bread and butter, they are deep and persistent. And no wonder. Intensive cultivation (which automatically kills down wild flowers) is of course a note of modern life, but to my mind there is a touch of spiritual commercialism about it that does not mate sympathetically with art. Two or three years ago some of our husbandmen were declaring that ' broadcasting must go.' Well ! they make it ' go ' like anything now ! ' There's a great composer called X,' said my servant the other day. ' How on earth do you know ? ' I asked, much surprised. ' O,' she said, ' Mrs. C. told us they said so on the wireless, so we listened in last night and it was *very pretty*.'

I wish I dared say who ' X ' is, for this anecdote would greatly delight him—a thoroughly good fellow, much of whose music I love. But there are other composers—Y, for instance, and Z ; yet only these intensively cultivated ones get a look in, and the consequence is that

publishers won't even consider an outsider's music (here I speak from bitter experience in the past) knowing very well that it won't be pushed. And some of these unfortunates cannot pay the prices extorted by our copyists! All this would not matter so much in Germany or Austria, where, as music is a necessity of life, it is cheap, and the stream wide and deep enough to float even outsiders. Alas! here it is but a poor little trickle, not in the least a common necessity. There is so very little space available in programmes for new work . . . what if it is all bespoke by nominees of the Inner Circle? That is what I mean by killing down the wild flowers; once that has happened, goodbye to the charm of the countryside.

And as final word, before putting aside, I hope for ever, the thread with which the greater part of this discourse has been woven, may I say this to all who have opportunities to give or withhold. If some girl or other is a better coach, accompanist, chorus-trainer, leader of an orchestra, stage manager, or scene painter than that white-headed boy of yours who, in the old days, would have got the job as a matter of course, don't give it to him but to the girl.[1]

And now, as I am working to a close, a miracle has happened! It is Sunday, November 6, and having written thus far I laid down my pen and opened the *Sunday Times*—home of Edmund Gosse's articles on

[1] Here are lights thrown while this book is in the Press: (*a*) *Remark* by Sir Henry Wood: 'Men tend to sing flat, women to sing sharp'; (*b*) *Dialogue*: Speakers, *E.S.* and a *Young Conductor*. Subject, wood-wind. *E.S.* 'I was delighted to hear that you told B. that, after Mr. S., the best . . . player in England is Miss J.' *Y.C.* (*much perturbed*) 'I do hope you won't quote me as saying that, for if so *I shall get no men to play for me*.' *E.S.* 'Well, I hope some day men's nerves may be equal to the shock of hearing that a woman plays better than themselves, *if she does*; in fact that Art will come first with them, not Sex!' (*Y.C.* hastily added that men have more *experience* than women as orchestral players; and *E.S.* did *not* reply, 'Of course—since men combine to prevent their acquiring it!')

literature, for which reason I take it in. And this time, in order to see whether I was rightly informed as to Mr. Newman's pessimism, for once I glance at the musical column. What do I find there? Why, that this old friend (for once we were friends) must have been telepathically aware of my remarks about the effect of woman's passionate energy on tired or dessicated male nerves; anyhow he has most kindly furnished my catapult with the smoothest, roundest stone that England's shores can provide. Here it is (the italics of course are mine): 'Madame Suggia put such *terrific energy* into her playing that it was hardly surprising if the strings grumbled a little now and then at the treatment they were receiving, and that we, for our part, thought wistfully of the *tender masculinity* of Casals. But when the Tigress chose to do "velvet paws" the effect was entrancing.'

There it is, you see! He wanted a banana—and I believe a *fresh* banana is as exquisite a thing as Casals' art. But the point of Suggia is that she is not Casals or anyone else, but her own impassioned, incomparable self. . . . And suddenly I think of the ecstatic praise lavished years ago on the sweet, soapy tone of a certain young violinist (I said it was seldom my good fortune to see eye to eye with the Faculty) who is now most unfairly dubbed 'a disappointment.' There was a banana if you like—one of the imported tallow-candle sort! . . . And I remember too the Bohemian Quartet, hunted out of England for 'scraping' . . . ! Well, well!

Envoi

In bringing this study of contemporary life to a close, I recall a remark often addressed to me by an old friend in the violent, incautious days of my youth: 'Vous n'êtes donc jamais lasse de vous faire des ennemis?' . . . Shall I make many enemies by writing as I have written? . . . However that may be, the risk had to be taken,

the boats burned. For what should I be worth—I, who have said so much about woman's directness, who count so surely on her moral courage—if I shrink, for fear of personal consequences, from saying what I think ought to be said by someone?

Well, who knows? perhaps there will be no consequences. Deeply implanted in the heart of our race is a sense of fair play, and also I think a certain respect for those who speak out, even at some risk to themselves, so long as it is done without malice. This claim at least I can advance, and one must leave it at that.

Incidentally I seem to have answered *ambulando* a question friends sometimes put—as to whether I mean to write another volume of 'Impressions that Remained.' But those Memoirs, which end at the year 1889, are almost a day by day record; and though it is admissible, and good fun, to do what I have done in this book and elsewhere—select and deal with episodes that seem to me significant or amusing in the thirty-eight years that followed—it would be a distressing, almost a pathological task, to clothe with live flesh every single bone in the skeleton presented here. Such amplifications are better left to the imagination of sympathy—better still forgotten. But having alluded often in these pages to my own music—as of course was inevitable, though it is the music of other women that was really in my mind most of the time—I should like to tell those who have thus far read me with patience exactly what I feel on that theme.

Though the pleasure taken in my work by a few great friends—many of them anything but experts; by a few great artists—most of them foreigners, though one of the greatest of them all, Violet Woodhouse, is English; or by entirely simple unsophisticated people, like the Old Vic public; though this gives me unspeakable joy, yet, in my heart of hearts, I am as detached from praise as from the contempt implied by the label I have worn all

my life. This simply because I had to do without the praise and put up with the contempt. It is the chase, not the quarry, that makes the splendour of our days—also their anguish ; and as a hound that belongs to no pack will hunt a line all by himself for love of hunting, so my life has been a solitary pursuit of the dream that lured me from home when I was a girl—the dream that every artist pursues, though seldom, I think, in solitude so utter as mine ; the elusive vision that Henri de Régnier's dancing maiden danced after, with outstretched arms, through the autumn-stricken wood,

> ' Cherchant sa bouche amère ou douce en fuite dans le vent.'

And our only moments of perfect happiness are when we seem to touch a fold of that intangible garment.

As for the class in which a given artist's work belongs, it is of course the cherished hope, the upholding belief of every English creator that what he leaves behind him will be ' for ever England,' but if this should prove to be an illusion, what matter ? It is always hard to gauge contemporary work, and in my own case particularly so. The exact worth of my music will probably not be known till naught remains of the writer but sexless dots and lines on ruled paper. I do not know it myself, nor need I.

But if something of an immense savour of life that hope deferred has been powerless to mar ; if the sense of freedom, detachment, serenity that floods the heart when suddenly, mysteriously, the wretched backwater of a personal fate is swept out of the shallows and becomes part of the main current of human experience ; if even a modicum of all this gets into an artist's work, that work was worth doing. And should the ears of others, whether now or after my death, catch a faint echo of some such spirit in my music, then all is well . . . and more than well.

January 1928.

THE CURATE

(A True Story)

It seems hardly necessary to state that this Scene from Clerical Life is not an effort of imagination but authentic ; my own rôle therein was too feebly played, the openings given me were too poorly exploited to have been invented. Like everything I have written, or ever may write, that purports to be a genuine experience, it is faithful in every detail, except, of course, as to proper names.

On the other hand, if accused of ferocity I admit the charge, and can only plead that on certain occasions all of us see red. I see red when two things happen : firstly, when some friend's affection takes the form of trying to make one care what is or is not the fashion in the matter of hats ; secondly, when people fail to respect your freedom to live as you choose, and endeavour, from the highest motives of course, to draw you into some other scheme of life—sociability, for instance.

It was an ill-starred attempt to work the second of these miracles that brought me into conflict with the curate.

. . . . . .

Not long ago I took a tiny cottage at Ockley, in the Midlands, for a couple of months in order to be near a very cultivated friend of mine, Mrs. Ainslie, whose brains I wished to pick in the interest of a piece of work then on hand. The Ainslies are old inhabitants in that district and perfectly delightful. Belonging on either

side to well-known families, Cabinet Ministers and persons of like distinction are apt to plop informally into the quiet week-end pool of their lives ; and, however far removed you may be from giving yourself airs, these events spread faint circles of awe in country neighbourhoods. Mr. Ainslie has done good public work in his time, and is now wholly immersed in scientific pursuits. Of great intellectual distinction, courteous in manner, and decidedly alarming, his habits are those of a recluse, although he is not above an occasional round of golf with a carefully-selected partner.

Mrs. Ainslie, the soul of kindness and a pillar of practical institutions such as county councils, girls' clubs, baby-preserving schemes, and so forth, has contrived to keep herself out of the mesh of local hospitality ; not an impossible thing to do if you play neither bridge, golf, nor tennis, and have an ingratiating way, when personally entreated to go to a party, of putting your head on one side and saying, ' That *would* have been nice ! ' . . . and then not going. I think she and her little girl attend Church fairly regularly, and on the great Church festivals Mr. Ainslie may possibly accompany them. Certainly he would subscribe to all deserving local charities, but I think that is about the sum of his activities as a churchman—the pertinence of which indications will appear later on.

I proposed to lead exactly the same life at Ockley as in my own neighbourhood, where kind friends quite understand and take it as a matter of course that, although busy people may love playing outdoor games, it is impossible for them to pay calls and go to parties. Luckily this cottage belonged to the sister of a golf-friend of mine at home, so I had the comfort of knowing that my Diogenes reputation would precede me—in fact, I had specially asked my friend to dwell on it. I saw the Ainslies pretty often, and picked up an occasional

match with stray women at the golf club. Otherwise I kept myself strictly to myself.

My landlord, Mr. Jermyn, lived in a largish house close by, and as he and his wife had been more than kind and reasonable about the kitchen range and other burning questions I went one day to thank them, this being the first time I had entered their house otherwise than on business. I knew little about them except that they were very Low Church and did a great deal of good in a way that does not appeal to every one, but is good all the same.

Presently Mrs. Jermyn said, rather eagerly, 'Do you know we have a new curate? And he was *fearfully* excited to hear you are staying here. He's most *wonderfully* musical. . . .'

I met the situation, an eternally recurring one, with tactics born of many a bitter experience, and said that if music is your job you avoid no one more sedulously than the musical amateur.

'O, but he's not at all *that* sort of amateur!' she exclaimed. 'He has studied at the Royal Academy of Music, and was going to take up music as a profession, only he then decided to go into the Church; in fact he's really a great musician.'

'He can't be a very great musician,' I said, now definitely on the defensive, 'or he wouldn't have given it up for the sake of the Church or anything else.' I was quite aware this might shock Mrs. Jermyn, but really people must be told sometimes that music is not a side issue, and that those who treat it as such cannot possibly be 'great' musicians.

'I assure you he *is* a great musician all the same,' she repeated, still more eagerly. 'He sits at that piano for hours and hours playing quite too beautifully. He *loves* our piano!'

She was a nice, gentle woman, and when in a normal frame of mind her rather shy, nervous manner was

pleasantly counteracted by a humorous twinkle in her eye. But now her hands were interlocked in subdued excitement, and behind her words was something which reminded me that, ever since the Hanoverians came, music and religion have been inextricably mixed up in the English mind. Anyhow the curate had obviously captured her imagination.

Strange how often one is informed in England that So-and-so is a wonderful musician. The people who tell you this would hesitate to point out among their ordinary acquaintance a subversive thinker, a front-rank astronomer, a budding Lord Chancellor. On these fields a dim sense of their own unfitness to pontificate might hamper them ; but everyone is prepared to lay down the law about music. Nine times out of ten one lets it pass, but on this occasion I felt that a dangerous flank attack was impending. So I said straight out, as civilly as I could, that playing which entranced my interlocutor would not necessarily entrance me ; on the contrary, it might drive me frantic.

She saw her chance and pounced.

' Well,' she said, her eyes glittering with excitement, ' when he calls on you, which he is looking forward to doing, you will be able to put it to the test, and I know I am right in predicting that you'll simply *love* his playing.'

I saw that my worst fears were justified. Steps must be taken at once.

' Mrs. Jermyn,' I said, ' you *must* help me in this matter. You know that I never see visitors, that no one ever calls on me, and you must tell the curate so and prevent his coming.'

I then explained quite seriously and earnestly that my servant, being Irish, was a very bad hand at saying ' Not at home,' and had got into fearful trouble with me more than once on that account ; that the garden in which

I combed Pan II, my blue-and-white bob-tailed sheepdog, was small and overlooked by passers-by ; that I hated being rude to people, but should infallibly be rude to the curate if he persisted in coming to see me, this being a point on which I see red, and so on.

All this time she was alternately protesting in parenthesis that his playing really *was* wonderful, and giggling in nervous deprecation of my relentless attitude—a mixture of boldness and timidity such as a turtle-dove might display in defence of its nest. Quite extraordinary ! But I stuck to my guns, and with a final ' Now I *trust* to you to see to this matter ! ' (as who should say, ' As a Christian you surely will prevent a scandal ? ') I bade her good night.

About a week later I was returning home across the common, Pan at my heels. It was 4.30, which in February is evenfall, but Pan's huge white head is visible even on a moonless night. When I was within some two hundred yards of my cottage an advancing bicycle suddenly materialised in the gloom, and from it leaped, with Ariel swiftness and grace, a young man in clerical garb, who, sweeping off his hat, said in a manner at once gentle, winning, and enthusiastic :

' Dr. Ethel Smyth . . . surely ! '

When you are tired and close on the goal of tea, it is not pleasant to be stopped by a stranger, let alone one whom you specially wish shall remain a stranger. I hoped it was not too dark for him to see my face as I uttered the inevitable monosyllable.

' I *thought* it must be you,' he said, still enthusiastic, ' because of the dog. . . . *I've just been calling on you.*'

He was good-looking, as far as I could see, and spoke like a gentleman. Perhaps Mrs. Jermyn's heart had failed her, after all !

' O,' I said, trying to put an inflection of civil dismay into my voice, ' but . . . you know . . . no

one ever calls on me ! I asked Mrs. Jermyn to tell you so.'

'I know, I know,' he exclaimed in a gush of candour, 'but I really couldn't help it !' (No answer.) 'I have so often admired your beautiful dog ! What a faithful fellow he is ! Never leaves your side for a moment ! May I ask what his name is ?'

I was not unwilling to discourse for a second on the undeniable beauty of my dog, or even reveal his name, after which I was preparing to walk on with a 'Good night,' when, leaning over his bicycle, he said, more winningly than ever :

'May I not come back with you ?'

A determined youth, evidently. I replied I was sorry, but that I had writing to do before post-time, 'apart from which,' I said again, 'I never see visitors on principle. If you see one you have to see all, and nothing gets done.'

'Well,' he said, 'I shall try again and again, and you shall drive me from your door as often as you please till one day perhaps you will let me in.'

I informed him that this would not do at all ; that one day I might indeed let him in, but should certainly end by being disagreeable to him, and that I hate being disagreeable. 'Later on,' I said, 'when all sorts of present jobs are behind me, I will write and ask you to tea.' (And I mentally decided that the date would fall in the last week of my stay.)

'No, no !' he cried. 'You'll forget all about it ! *Let* me risk finding you at leisure some evening ! You surely don't work all day long ?'

His insistence nettled me. 'No,' I said, 'I don't work all day long, but I have my whole life to arrange and administer, and that always takes time, however humble a scale you live on. Then I have a large family, and also friends with whom I correspond—really correspond ;

we write each other as good letters as we can, and that again takes time. And I am passionately fond of reading. But the chief point is that I like my own company and solitude. I'm a genuine recluse.'

'I *love* recluses,' he said, with a strong touch of a manner I had already noticed, the fatal manner of the pet curate. Young, good-looking, musical, how should he have escaped petting?

To this declaration of love I replied with what I think was justifiable snappishness:

'I daresay you do love recluses! Most people want what they can't have.' Then, not wishing after all to hurt his feelings, I added in a friendly and disjointed manner, 'I *will* write some day and ask you to tea. . . . I'm really very sorry . . . but it can't be helped! Good night.'

He lifted his hat. 'Good night, then, Dr. Smyth; good night, doggie!' (Pan is a large, heavy dog)—after which he sprang Mercury-like on to his bicycle and sped away.

When I got home my servant, who always tells a story in dialogue, said:

'I've had ever such work with a gentleman who called and wanted me to let him come in and wait till you came home. "I daren't let you in, sir," I said, "unless you've an appointment." "You're Irish, aren't you?" says he. "I am," says I. "I'm Irish myself," says he—"at least, that's not quite true, but my mother was, and I love the Irish." I said, "Thank you, sir, but I daren't let you in all the same!" "But Dr. Smyth must be coming home soon!" says he. "She'll be back at half-past four for her tea," says I. "*Why, it's half-past four now!*" says he, and tries to push past me. He *was* a determined gentleman!'

Mentally giving him a good mark for pulling up in the midst of his blarney about being Irish, I recounted

our meeting on the common, and said I thought we had seen the last of him. Whereupon she remarked :

'*That one'll come again*.'

Two or three days later, walking through the village I came upon a pretty group—a clerical figure bending over a bicycle and talking to a little girl. It was a cold, foggy afternoon, and in the imperfect light the long round-about coat looked like an apron, the trousers tightly clipped about the ankles might have been gaiters, and a large shovel hat completed the illusion.

Wishing to soften the impression of our last meeting, for of course it was the curate, I said :

'In the fog I took you for a bishop ! But no doubt it's coming events casting their shadows before them ! '

He put his head on one side and said pensively :

'*I hope I do not cast a shadow !* '

'I only wish you did,' I answered smartly, 'for that would mean that the sun was shining.'

(I apologise for the factitious brilliance of this duologue. Both of us were evidently above our usual form, but, once more I say it, my record is faithful.)

Close at hand a football match was thudding and yelling itself to a conclusion. I learned with pleasure that the village had won fourteen out of its sixteen matches and bade the curate good-bye. As I went away he said :

'If ever that grand fellow of yours is stolen you will know who the thief is.'

II

Before embarking on the second half of this drama I must mention that during my stay at Ockley Pan had struck up the most curious relations with a certain chow. When they met on the golf-course accompanied by their respective owners there was a good deal of growling, and if one had paid the slightest attention there would

probably have been a fight. If they met in the road unattended, for I often watched them from an upper window, though rather distant in manner they were exceedingly polite to each other, at times even to the verge of friendliness.

But it was the third aspect of their alliance that really counted. All along my frontage grew a thick privet hedge, and at certain hours the chow would turn up and begin silently thundering up and down outside it till the ground shook. Pan, however deeply sunk in sleep (and my room was not on the road), would start up, agitate to be let out into the garden, and begin tearing up and down our side of the hedge, barking furiously all the time and well out-galloping the chow, while the gravel flew in handfuls. This frantic game they would keep up for an amazing time, both of them uttering horrible choking growls at the turning-points, where the ground on either side of the hedge was churned into a hollow.

If you opened the wicket, as I sometimes did for fun, instead of flying at each other's throats as might have been expected, each dog instantly became oblivious of the other's presence, the chow drifting away down the road, and Pan finding his way back into the house in an equally casual manner. And both of them managed subtly to convey that my action had been tactless and unsportsmanlike. Early March is not always golfing weather, and sometimes the roads were too muddy to let a thick-coated dog follow a bicycle ; on such days these visits were a godsend, affording Pan ideal exercise and entertainment combined. And when the chow's master, a golfer with whom I was on bowing acquaintance, apologised, and proposed in the interests of *la bienséance* to put a stop to this scandalous style of calling on another dog, I was greatly distressed and implored him on no account to interfere.

One evening about six o'clock I was writing, when Pan woke out of sleep with a low growl. 'The chow,' I said, and at once got up to let him out of the front door; yet, as I fumbled with the bolt, he seemed to be less madly impatient than usual. And, again, as he shot like an arrow through the porch, his barking had not quite the usual ring, so much so that I peered into the gloom.

'What do you mean,' someone said playfully, 'by setting your ferocious animal at me in this manner?'

And there, flattened against the wall of the house, was the curate.

I lost my head so completely as to say, though in an icy tone, 'Will you come in?'

'*Thank* you!' he said effusively, and followed me into the sitting-room. I silently pointed to the sofa, and, taking a cane chair, planted it in front of the fire and sat bolt upright on it, presenting a profile to my visitor.

(Silence.)

'What a charming little place this is!' he said at last. 'I often wondered as I passed who had taken it and what it was like inside. . . .'

Wondered who had taken it? I looked at him, and doubt assailed me. Out of doors, springing on and off his bicycle, his excellent figure showing to advantage, he had rather the conquering hero air. But in the house, sitting on the sofa, without his hat of course, he looked very, very young and rather feeble. Good heavens! was it perhaps a stranger who had stepped innocently into the lion's den? . . . and here was I being as freezing and repellent as I knew how!

'Then are there *two* new curates?' I asked quite pleasantly, 'for I don't think we have ever met. . . .'

'Why, you know me quite well,' he answered. 'Don't you remember taking me for a bishop?'

My pleasantness vanished. 'But I asked you not to call,' I said.

'I know you did,' was the smiling reply, 'but . . . here I am, you see!'

With the absurd idea of shaming him, I remarked to the fireplace, 'Someone whom I told about our interview after your first visit bet me half-a-crown that you would call again. I am sorry you have lost me the bet.'

'Well,' he said, with extreme playfulness, 'I suppose the least I can do is to pay the half-crown myself! Don't you think so?'

To this remark I made no reply, but continued gazing into the fire, not moving an eyelash. There was a very long pause and you heard the clock ticking. Again he began, but this time rather nervously:

'We had a delightful concert in the Town Hall at X. last Thursday; you really would have enjoyed it. We did the "Hymn of Praise" and "The Last Judgment"; there were ten strings, and really the orchestra . . .'

I interrupted, again addressing the fireplace:

'I wonder if being in the Church makes people thick-skinned?'

'Perhaps so,' he said in his brightest manner; 'but to go on about the concert, the chorus sang splendidly. You remember the high B flat in "The Last Judgment," where the violins have that curious passage that always reminds me of . . .'

I now faced round slowly and looked at him.

'I want to know,' I said, 'what makes a man act like this. I sent you a civil message asking you not to call; I explained to you at great length *why* I did not wish you to call, and that it was not from any personal reason. And yet you force your way into my house. What on earth makes you do such a thing?'

The curate said, very simply:

'I suppose it is love of God.'

I have confessed elsewhere to a temperamental dislike

of certain methods of handling religious subjects, and a strong wave of it swept over me as I said :

'I am sorry love of God gives you bad manners '— the only approach to a repartee that stands to my credit throughout that whole interview.

'I am a minister of our Lord, you must remember,' he said gently, 'and have, as such, a duty towards my fellow-creatures. There are certain matters I much wish to discuss with you.'

I now perceived that if he desired to hob-nob with me musically, it was only as means to an end. While in those parts I had not attended divine service, and, having drawn certain conclusions, he was about to take my soul in hand. This was intolerable. I sprang up and seized a large book that was lying open on the table.

'Look at that!' I cried, and, being outraged and angry, no doubt my manner was imperative.

He took the book with a bewildered air, but did not examine it. I snapped it to, and holding the back close to his eyes I pointed to the title, 'God and the Supernatural.' Then I flew to a side table, and, taking up another book in which was a marker, I again displayed the title and bade him 'look at that.' It was 'The Varieties of Religious Experience,' by William James.

'The room is full of books on these subjects,' I went on, 'but I have not the slightest wish to discuss them with you, a stranger. Why should I?'

By this time the curate was on his feet, looking thoroughly astonished and a little crestfallen.

'I had no idea,' he said, 'that you took any interest in these subjects.'

'Then, my dear young man,' I retorted, 'you had better find out more about people before you force your acquaintance on them.'

I wish I had not called him my dear young man. It belongs to another epoch, did not ring true, and was,

I think, rather vulgar as coming from me ; but to be angry and not sin against good taste is difficult ; at least, I have sometimes found it so. Meanwhile I had moved towards the door, a pretty strong hint ; instead of taking it he steadied himself with one hand on the table and said :

'You have been very frank with me, Dr. Smyth ; I will be the same with you. When our Lord comes again' (here I groaned . . . '*O !*')—'and I am one of those who believe He might well come again to-day, while you and I are together in this very room' —(. . . '*O !*' . . .)—'surely He would like to find us all friends one with the other ? . . . That is why I came to see you.'

Stunned at finding this wanton intrusion classed as an act of merit, I failed to make the obvious retort that surely Christ, whose tact was as godlike as His other attributes, would not wish you to call on people who had expressly begged you to do nothing of the kind. I merely opened the door wide, and, saying 'Good-bye,' held out my hand. He took it. 'I hope,' he said, 'that I have not forfeited your friendship' (silence and a face of stone)—'or, at least, that we may still be friendly *acquaintances* !' And all this while my hand was in his. Finally, as it seemed unlikely he would relinquish it till some sort of assurance had been given, I led him under the portal and down the passage as if we were performing the visiting figure in 'the Lancers,' and, opening the front door, said once more, with the greatest decision, 'Good night.'

'*Good* night,' he said cordially, 'and *thank you for asking me to come in*. . . .'

Will it be believed that sheer amazement at his *aplomb*—in modern Anglo-Saxon, his cheek—once more bereft me of speech, and it was not till the gate clicked behind him that the correct answer occurred to me.

But it would hardly have been dignified to run after him and call out :

'You only got in at all because I thought you were the chow.'

Blazing with wrath I rang up Mrs. Ainslie on the telephone and told her what had happened. She was highly amused, but shared my indignation.

'He would never dare to come here,' she said, 'and insist on seeing John' (John being her husband). 'It's just that you are a woman living alone.'

This gave me an idea. It was an hour to post-time, and I sat down and wrote as follows :

'DEAR SIR—

'As you consider it your duty to visit people in this parish whether they desire your acquaintance or not, I suggest that you go and call upon my neighbour, Mr. Ainslie. He is, like myself, a recluse, and probably arrogates to himself, as I do, the right to choose his own acquaintance, but this should not weigh with you. As servants are usually trained to say "Not at home" to strangers, I enclose a plan of the house. A path to the left (marked P on the plan), cut through the laurels, will lead you straight to the windows of Mr. Ainslie's study (which I have outlined in red), and I trust you will rap on them and insist on being received. Otherwise I shall think your visit an impertinence reserved for single women who live alone—and I should be sorry to think that.

'Yours faithfully,

'ETHEL SMYTH.'

I confess that the first draft of this letter was written in anger, but by the time it was copied out and despatched I was possessed solely by curiosity as to what would happen next, and a general sense of rounding off a fantastic

incident in a fitting manner. Next day I confided to Mrs. Ainslie what I had done ; she had told John about the visit, and it appeared that he had already remarked in all innocence, ' Why, I shouldn't wonder if he looked *me* up next ! ' But we agreed it would be wiser to say nothing about the letter, and waited in great excitement for further developments.

After some days I got the following reply :

' Dear Dr. Smyth—

' I must apologise for not answering your note before, but I have been very busy. I am very sorry if my visit caused you any annoyance the other day. I think, however, in all fairness you must realise, that while I was still on your doorstep it was in your power to say, " Please do not come in," but, on the contrary, you were kind enough to invite me in, so I came. If your friends are likewise kind enough to admit me, I shall be very happy to meet them when I call.

' Yours sincerely,

' Hyacinth Norval.'

I fancy that anyone who has been disposed to pity the curate will admit, after reading this letter, which was written in the most exquisite scholarly Oxford hand-writing, that he scored the odd trick. As for the name bestowed upon him here, it is the only name I can invent that approaches his own in romantic suggestiveness. Given that name he was as inevitably foredoomed to become a pet curate as ' Bill Sikes ' was to embrace the career of housebreaker, or ' Sir Guy Morville ' to inflame the imaginations of young ladies in the 'sixties.

A few days before I left he flashed past me and a fellow-golfer on his bicycle, and I am glad to say returned my friendly greeting in a similar spirit. And this was my last glimpse of him.

Shortly after my departure he really did call on the

Ainslies, and as she was out (she is never in), he asked to see Mr. Ainslie about some parish papers he had brought with him. The servant came back with a message that if he would leave them Mr. Ainslie would look through them ; whereupon I regret to say he did *not* go round and rap at the study windows.

Mr. Ainslie believes, but is not sure, that it is part of a clergyman's duty to make the acquaintance of every soul in the parish. But even if it were in the Thirty-nine Articles, which it isn't, the elasticity of the Anglican scheme is its most precious feature in my eyes, and I hold to my opinion that the curate's behaviour was outrageous. At the same time, if ever man earned the title Napoleon bestowed on Masséna, 'the bravest of the brave,' it is he ; for a recluse seeing red at the violation of her reclusiveness is not a pleasant proposition to tackle.

What Mrs. Ainslie tells me in her letters about his music (gathered from hearsay, of course) goes in at one ear and out at the other—as she knows it would ; in fact these reports are drafted with the sole object of getting a rise. But I learn without astonishment that though terribly 'low,' he is considered a most excellent and amiable young man ; also that he reads the lessons admirably and does a great deal of good in the parish, his speciality being 'a wonderful way with children.' I can well imagine they would be more in his line than certain grown-ups.

In conclusion, when I reflect on his various qualities : his pluck, his persistence (without which nothing can be achieved), his adroitness in gaining his point, besting me at every turn and putting me in the wrong at last ; the combination of tenacity and prudence he displayed in the matter of the Ainslies, actually demanding an interview of the alarming master of the house but declining to be goaded by me into banging at the window—when I meditate these things, I feel certain

that the mist-wreathed vision of a youthful bishop was no lying portent. Ere many years are past I shall see him in lawn sleeves (however 'low' you are even the lowest give in on certain points), and the playful manner it is so difficult to respond to suitably will have been laid aside with his trouser-clips.

The worst of it is that by then he will be beyond the reach of such as me. For which reason, combined with the contrariness of human nature and the comfortable fact that Ockley is a good three hundred miles away from here, I sometimes catch myself wishing that I *had* asked him to tea, after all.

HENRY WOOD

I

THE first duty of one who writes about Sir Henry Wood is to break gently to the public the fact that he is a kind of monster ; for how else shall we describe a great conductor devoid of pose, a public man who, although one of the greatest educative influences in the country, gives himself no airs, a richly equipped musician who nevertheless is an absolutely normal human being ?

These are points of such absorbing interest that the present chronicler finds it hard to pull her attention round to biographical facts such as the occasion demands. But they shall be dealt with, though in a state of high compression.

His father, friend and pupil of John Hullah, sang for thirty years in the choir of St. Sepulchre's, Holborn, and, like his son, taught singing. Sir Henry remembers his pointing out to him another friend, Sir John Goss: 'Look at him well,' he said ; 'there's a man whose teacher, Attwood, had shaken hands with Mozart !' Yet, in spite of this ready-made link with music, young Henry's vocation was a debatable point, his talent for drawing and painting being as marked as his musical gift ; the necessity of earning a livelihood, however, eventually weighted the balance in favour of music.

For seven years he studied under Ebenezer Prout, and after that put in six terms at the Royal Academy of Music. Once when I was talking about the escapades

of Leipzig Conservatorists he spoke of his organ teacher, Dr. Steggall, whose endearing habit of partaking of refreshment during the classes is explained by the fact that they began at 8.30 A.M. And no sooner did he make for the table in the next room, on which the maid had just deposited sherry and sandwiches, than the pupil at the organ would pull out the 16-foot trombone pedal-stop, whereupon the Doctor would rush back to expostulate at the hideous din while the other pupils drank the sherry. Evidently the only difference between England and Germany is that at Leipzig it would have been beer, or perhaps Schnapps.

His education finished, for some years Wood conducted opera in the provinces, and it was shortly after the failure of Signor Lago's opera season that his old fellow-student at the Academy, Robert Newman, the first Manager of the Queen's Hall, conceived the idea of Promenade Concerts, and offered him the post of conductor should the scheme materialise. It did, thanks to a friend of one of Wood's pupils, who, while attending a singing class as listener, heard the matter being discussed, and instantly offered to bank £5000 for Mr. Newman. He lost £2300 of it on the first season, but the concerts soon became a financial success, and continued so for many years. Since about 1910, for various reasons, including the enormous charges all round and the absorption by the cinema of orchestral players, it has become manifest that symphony concerts will in all probability never pay again ; not in London, anyhow, where I am told four million people go to the theatre and only ten thousand to concerts. And the proportion is probably the same everywhere in England.

The Promenade Concerts are the most important factor in our musical life of to-day, and to put them through, year after year, is a thing which I verily believe no man but Henry Wood could do. Think of the

programme construction alone—ten weeks (as it used to be and as we hope it will be again) of nightly concerts in which no item appears twice, and in which every class of good music, ancient or modern, home-grown or foreign, finds a place. And meanwhile scores have to be studied, and the band kept going and conducted with spirit. How can flesh and blood stand it? And towards the close of the season a certain type of critic will not fail to point out that band and conductor are falling off! . . .

After the 'Proms' are over the usual strenuous music season sets in, and besides his work in London there are countless provincial musical enterprises in which Sir Henry is involved. Any of the people he works with can enumerate the qualities that make his supreme value in our music life; his thoroughness, for instance; his quickness; his right judgment; his knowledge of human nature, which includes sense of humour and makes both for indulgence and authority. No one exploits as he does the last ounce of a possibility, whether in foreseeing and forestalling hitches, or in making good when, in spite of all, they happen; and as musical enterprises in the provinces are often run by enthusiastic amateurs, the organisation sometimes leaves much to be desired. Hence it happens that on your arrival at three o'clock to rehearse, it is discovered that the harp part, or the fourth horn part has unfortunately been sent to London with the last concert's music. Most conductors shrug their shoulders, and, knowing that 'it never will be missed,' do without that harp or horn. But Sir Henry sets to work after the rehearsal to write out the part himself, and if possible goes through it with the performer immediately before the concert. And the point is, he would act similarly whether it is a question of a small town where he is conducting for a nominal fee, or a big occasion.

But the most perfect monument to his thoroughness is a small box that, when required, emits a continuous

'A,' before which the players pass in single file on their way to the Queen's Hall platform in order to possess themselves of the true pitch. The evolution of this apparatus, child of one of his main passions, applied science, was a long business, and fragments of the story as told by him float in my brain. Sir James Dewar, the Cambridge Scientific Society, and thirty-five pounds came in, I think, during the first stage, but the resultant electric tuning fork declined to go on sounding for the requisite thirty minutes. In the next stage there were visits to, or reports from, two foreign exhibitions ; also 'no mercury contact,' though I cannot recall if this was a misfortune or a blessing. Anyhow, this fork 'fitted any switch,' and was used for some time, but as it cost only a hundred and five marks, as against thirty-five pounds, the least it could do was perpetually to get out of order. Then Sir Henry and a lady, daughter of Dr. Stone the acoustician, got to work on organ-pipe lines, and the wholly successful result is a tiny wind-chest with three little bellows which relieve each other when out of breath, and a reed made of German silver—a metal impervious to climatic variations which surely ought to have been evolved in England. This machine is worked by a handle, and after many years the 'A' is not one vibration out.

The twenty minutes' procession before that box, player after player dominated by its soft persistent voice, is, to my mind, a strangely impressive sight—ritualistic, almost sacrificial, and reminiscent, somehow, of the Elgin marbles frieze ! But the system finds no imitators, for if it is not to be a farce, the conductor must be on the spot, like a general, half an hour before the battle begins. Only a man of this stamp could ask what he does of his orchestra during the 'Prom' season and get it.

II

It has always been considered the mark of the perfect horseman to be doing nothing, apparently, but sit still, and in the past all great conductors rode their orchestras on these lines ; Nikisch, Richter, and Mottl, for instance, and Mahler—the greatest of them all, I think. Half the time Mahler seemed hardly to be ' conducting ' at all, though his men could tell tales of the terrifically strong, flexible grip in which they were held. But later conductors, inspired perhaps by Sousa, are kind enough to let the audience amply into the secret of how it is done ; a deadly stab with the bâton, a twittering of the left-hand fingers as though to shake them free from dewdrops, a leap here, a crouch there, three steps to the left forwards, and back again, a tiptoe rounding of the left calf. O, there is no end to these diverting antics, which electrify the audience, in whose sole honour, of course, they are performed. Finding them distracting myself, I once thought of patenting a sort of conductor's rostrum like a sentry-box with wings, its back turned to the public, one welcome result of which would have been the retirement of certain conductors who shall be nameless into private life. But I doubt if the audience would have appreciated my sentry-box. ' Have you seen (*sic*) So-and-So conduct ? ' admirers of this style of conducting ask. ' He is *too* wonderful ! '

He is indeed ! Yet this important part of a conductor's activities is wholly neglected by that strange man, Henry Wood. When he takes up the bâton, his sole preoccupation is to get such results out of the orchestra as circumstances permit, and his gestures are nothing but carefully thought-out means to an end. If even he crouches now and again, it is because, when rehearsals have to be scamped, the players may easily overrun a *pp subito*. Foolhardy, perhaps, thus to reject

all fancy appeals to an audience's imagination ; but he is like that.

To the present writer the supreme point of his conducting is that he never puts himself between you and the music. His reading, though you may not always see eye to eye with him, is above all an honest endeavour to bring out the composer's intention, not to show off Wood. And this, given his profound musical culture and the born conductor's mastery of his material, is the reason why his conducting is never fatiguing, stale, or tricky. It is what Shakespeare's Audrey, if musical, would confidently have described as ' a true thing.' The methods of other conductors interest him deeply, and, being absolutely free from jealousy, he is the first to admire and extol good work. Otherwise he makes no professions, pegs out no claims, but steadily and quietly goes his way.

Nothing, I think, could prevent his instinctively taking the wisest, straightest, sanest view in all things ; witness his breaking up a ring with his refusal years ago to countenance the deputy system ; or again his inflexibility about having women in his band. He did not then know that Mozart thought them in some ways more gifted for the violin than men ; enough for him that he himself had come to this conclusion, and further considered that their collaboration makes for discipline and enthusiasm. Moreover, the penalising of girls who have spent as much money on their musical education as boys seemed to him criminal. Well did he know this line would be unpopular ; that the musical unions would hate it ; that covert allusions would be made to the ' weakness ' of his strings, whereas none would mention the fact that he has seventeen fewer of them than any other big orchestra !

But he has never paid the slightest attention to all this, nor made any sort of bid for popularity. First

and last he has cared only for his job, and his neglect of self-advertisement in any shape or form must be seen to be believed. It half delights, half provokes the present writer when one learns, quite by chance, things that somehow or other never get into the Press ; for instance, that coping with various ' Messiah ' conditions, he has orchestrated that work eight times ! Again, months before the event you learn that So-and-so is off to San Francisco, or Kamschatka, or even little Pedlington, to conduct ; and apparently one ought to be thankful that enough is left of this popular conductor to twitter a finger or ' make a leg ' in his own country, so violently are foreign capitals fighting for his favours ! Now, though constantly invited to cross the water, you never see pars of this kind about Sir Henry. But character makes itself felt in the end without adventitious aids ; and recently, when, owing to the rupture of the old connection between him and Messrs. Chappell, there seemed some danger that we might lose him, the outburst of respect and affection was good to witness.

III

Like Augustus Manns, it is, I think, as pioneer that his greatest work has been accomplished, especially as regards his championship of contemporary British music. No doubt some may find this statement fatuous as coming from a composer, so let me explain on what foundation it rests.

We are all agreed that the test of a country's vitality is what it produces ; that exports not imports are the things to brag about. When Christ said that the evil that proceeds from a man is what matters, not the evil that goes into him, it was the same idea put differently; or again, when the Romans dubbed themselves barbarians as compared with the Greeks, it was because they were

not producing but merely copying art. Hence it will be seen, that one who says that a group of musical creators of importance proves the musicality of a country more convincingly than pulling off 1000 concerts per diem is simply uttering a truism. France is artistically alive to-day, not because of the imposing bulk of the Louvre galleries, but because within living memory of man she has produced painters like Manet, Corot, Cêzanne, Monet, and the rest of them—men who have taught us to see the world through the finest eyes of our epoch ; which is the meaning of Oscar Wilde's profound paradox about Nature imitating Art. And may I further point out that if these men's pictures had never been exhibited we could never have mastered our lesson.

Now the office of the composer is to express the soul of his generation in terms of music ; the task of the public to learn to recognise its own emotions when thus expressed. But how can this reciprocal action take place unless new music is constantly and beautifully performed ? If people think they can keep themselves responsive to the message of their own time (to do which is a matter of first importance) by the easy process of poring over the classics, they are much mistaken. When ill and intellectually enfeebled, some of us fly to books we know backwards (mine are 'Vanity Fair' and 'The Real Charlotte'). But if we are in rude health, such behaviour is lamentable. No, no ; buy a paper-knife and see what your contemporaries are thinking about. Nations or individuals that wish to keep their youth must consort with the young.

I do not know if Henry Wood had any theories whatsoever on the subject, but if you examine his programmes of past years you will see that long, long before this or that conductor was claiming to be the British composer's friend, he was not only producing English novelties, but giving them again and again, if good

enough, as a matter of course. Other conductors, sometimes from passion, sometimes from policy, will push one particular composer, but Henry Wood's principle is 'no pets,' nor has there been any ostentatious backing of personalities it is prudent to conciliate; nothing but a determination that no English musician who deserves a hearing should be able to say: 'I never had a chance.'

His curiosity and unerring instinct as regards alien novelties are notorious, and one is always lighting on new proofs of the scope of his outlook. When I was writing the monograph on Augusta Holmes that forms a chapter of this book I asked him if he had ever come across any of her work? 'Why,' he answered, 'I once produced a symphonic poem of hers called "Irlande,"' adding that it was first-rate and finely scored. That must have been a quarter of a century ago, and I wonder who but he would have had the curiosity in those days to examine a woman's work, let alone the courage, or shall we say the energy, to brush aside prejudice and perform it? This largeheartedness has never flagged, and I believe that every single concert-work of any importance written by a woman has been introduced by him (in my own case either by him or by some foreigner such as Nikisch or Walter). And one may add that, but for Henry Wood, not one of these works by women who had no Germans to fall back on would ever have been played at all.

A wonderful achievement, to have steadily, stubbornly pursued for thirty years an all-round forward policy in this most conservative of countries—a country, too, that after a musical sleep of more than two centuries was only just waking up—and of course in a far from enterprising state of mind! Hidebound committees would plead with justice that the public was not interested in native music

and averse to spending money on anything but some good old classic—'The Messiah' for choice. Most conductors followed the line of least resistance, being themselves, shall we say, pacifists ; and eventually, with the growing commercialism of the times, the present fashion was evolved of making a nice, safe stunt of the classics. (I deliberately use a vulgar word for a vulgar thing.) In the domain of chamber music the thing has been pushed to ludicrous extremes. As a hosier will dress his window with green ties and pale blue socks—an effective device no one quarrels with on the field of pure commercialism —so in our smaller concert halls you get a Bach series, a Beethoven series, or any classical series the agents can think out, but seldom if ever a new work. And unfortunately the artists lend themselves to this policy, forgetting that fresh water must flow through your soul if it is to keep sweet, that there are no easy roads in the kingdom of Art, and that you cannot serve God and Mammon, even though Mammon be disguised as Beethoven.

Now of course there was—and is—plenty of the same disease on the larger field, as anyone who examines the programmes of most provincial orchestral and choral societies, and indeed many of the London ones, can see for himself. One man only has steadily refused to give in more than was needful to this spirit. And let me say that when slackness or corruption creeps into any department of human activity, it is no use pleading that the circumstances were difficult. Circumstances always *are* difficult to those who are disinclined to tackle them. The state of things in the Church of England before the Oxford Movement was chiefly the fault of timid, lazy, unfaithful shepherds ; and if, in music, men of influence had not fostered and battened on the 'Vanity Fair' *cum*-dressing-gown-and-slippers frame of mind, the task of those who are now following Henry Wood's trail—and

who were in shorts when he first blazed it—would be far easier than it is. Meanwhile I think it is no exaggeration to say, that if there is any healthy curiosity as regards English music for these to work on, if there is indeed such a thing at all as a school of British composers, it is mainly owing to Henry Wood.

And look at the spirit in which he has championed native art! If there is a celebrated classic—let us say the Jupiter symphony—and a novelty on a programme, many conductors will spread themselves on the classic and let the novelty take its chance. Exactly the opposite idea obtains at a Henry Wood rehearsal: 'Mozart will survive a performance,' he will say, 'that would kill poor L's Tone-Poem.' His rehearsal fund was of course started mainly in our interest, and not one of us but has tales to tell of his patience, his incredible kindness and thoroughness, his masterly grip of our intentions. I do not believe any English novelty has ever been produced by him without his having gone through the orchestral parts himself . . . eight or nine hours of drudgery in order to save a few minutes at rehearsal, and give the work that much more rehearsing! If my theory, that the real test of a country's vitality lies in its creative power, is correct, what do we not owe this man, who, instead of waiting, as many of his colleagues still do, until pressure obliges them now and again to produce an English work, actually began his career by constituting himself the guardian of every flicker of musical life he considered worth fostering? Of all rare things on earth, the undramatic courage that enables a person to spend his life swimming against the stream is the rarest; but, as there was no other way of reaching the goal, Henry Wood found that courage. Well, these have their reward!

IV

Immediately after the importance of his services to English creative life, I should rank his present work at the Royal Academy of Music as Director of the Orchestra. Here again he has taken his own line, and the discipline enforced is good to see in these invertebrate times. One of his principles is that none of his strings have settled places ; not only are individual players constantly shifted about, but till five minutes before the class begins no one knows who is to lead the orchestra that day ; possibly a 2nd Violin from the last desk ! This spring I happened to go there to hear a Symphony which Sir Henry said was promising, composed and conducted by a pupil. A famous provincial conductor who was lunching with me was bidden to come along. I do not know when I have heard a more overwhelming volume of stringed sound than in the Concerto Grosso that followed the new Symphony. But it was above all the quality that pulsated in those young players which swept one away ; the fire, the musicianliness, the immense go, the discipline—so different to the blend of slap-dash and Weary Willie which is the style affected by many young music-makers of to-day (Wilhelmina being generally the contributor of the slap-dash element). My companion, a judge by no means given to lavish praise, said he did not believe there was anything like the sound of those strings in England ; but Sir Henry says he is only at the beginning of what he means to make of that orchestra, and I feel there are no limits to what his influence and initiative will yet do for the R.A.M. At the time of the Wood-Chappell breach I was told that someone said to him ' I hope to goodness you won't leave us and go to America,' and that his reply was ' Never fear ! I am far too much interested in my R.A.M. work to leave it.' I hope the story is true.

It has always seemed to me that the playing of works by contemporary compatriots ought to be part of the curriculum at these colleges of ours ; and though the Royal College of Music devotes much time and attention to composers connected with that institution, this is not at all the same thing. For if young people are trained up to believe that the only jewels worth setting are those dug in a particular mine, (the 'Van Houten's Cocoa' principle I have elsewhere called *spiritual commercialism*), firstly, this is grossly unfair to other composers ; secondly, it re-inforces the old English disease of music running exclusively in one channel (a bad thing, however good the channel); and thirdly, it makes for provincialism in art, the very last spirit that needs encouragement in this country. I wish, on the contrary, that the 'pet' system Henry Wood has always fought against could be extirpated at its very root in our educational establishments, and the reverse one inculcated.

V

To give over talking about the artist and embark on the subject of the man is often a thankless task, as more than one well-meant biography proves. But not in this case ; for what with the width of his vision, the multifariousness of his interests, the variety of his points of contact with life (matters in which head and heart are equally implicated) Henry Wood reminds one of a Renaissance figure ; of the days when men were not forced by competition into rigid specialism, but could afford to be all-round, highly-equipped human beings. Leonardo is the instance that occurs most readily to the mind ; another is Rubens, painter and Flemish Ambassador ; or Goethe, poet, architect, courtier, statesman, and biologist. Of their company is this heavily burdened man—this Power, as I always think of him—who among

other things is a member of the Royal Institution ; who finds time to keep abreast of all new departures in astronomy and most other sciences, and pores over books like Scripture's ' Experimental Phonetics ' ; who, from sheer interest in Einstein's theories, actually attended his lectures though he has no German, and declares one can deduce the lecturer's greatness from his face and manner alone. During his short holiday, during stray week-ends snatched from a whirl of work, his chief passion would seem to be the painting of strong, original landscapes ; that, and carpentering, as witness the paling, floors, doors, and walls of the old farmhouse the Woods bought at Chorleywood, one of the huge adjoining barns of which has been turned into a studio in spite of the rats. In fact, I should think there was not a keener, less *blasé* intelligence, a kindlier, more genial nature than his in this world ; small wonder that when he enters a room, someone seems to have switched on a fresh set of lights, and that under his handling, even not very vital music becomes alive.

Helped out by a natural dislike of ' unpleasantness,' and what in a horseman you would call perfect hands, (in a human being it is tact, I suppose), he is a bit of a diplomatist, but not to the point of insincerity. As a matter of fact I cannot imagine a situation in which he would fail to hit on the one kindly thing that can be said without verging on humbug. Once I remarked : ' What amazes me is the way you contrive to turn on the warm tap if it is humanly possible ' ; and those who know him will know, too, the funny look and tone with which he replied, ' Well, you don't want people to *catch cold*, do you ? ' But afterwards his wife said to me privately : ' It *is* amazing, and it constantly astonishes even me.'

From her I have learned more about certain aspects of his life than from himself—that wife without whom he could not get through half the work he shoulders, and

must have died of worry and fatigue long ago. When I am with them I often think of what I once heard someone say of Mr. Lloyd George during the war—a Lloyd George I hope we shall always remember, in spite of later impressions ; namely, that ' until you have seen him at home—a husband devoted to, amused by, and delighting in his wife ; a father who really enjoys the company of his children; a companion whom no uninformed person would suspect bears an almost fantastic weight on his shoulders—until you have seen these things you cannot judge how remarkable, because how *normal*, a man he is.' That is the best thing I have ever heard about our late Prime Minister, and if I repeat it here, it is because every word of it applies equally to the man I am talking about to-day.

I cannot deny that he has one rather serious fault—that of not estimating himself at his true value ; and this solitary lapse from sound judgment might, I sometimes fear, have disastrous results. It seems thinkable that, from modesty and amiability combined, he might let himself be overruled now and then though he knows he is right. And again, if it be true that people accept you at your own valuation, might not common spirits fail to perceive the high quality of one so unpretentious, so utterly incapable of blowing his own trumpet ? As regards the first point I only hope I am mistaken ; and of course it does not need the motto Mr. Dolmetsch writes on his harpsichords : ' Mieux vaut douceur que force,' and the fable about the sun and the wind, to remind one that the more obvious methods of getting your own way, such as bellowing and banging the table, are not always the best ! As for the other danger,—which matters far less, and which always goes with certain natures—one would rather take that risk than see their crystal clearness dimmed.

VI

While I am writing, the first volume of his book 'The Gentle Art of Singing' has been given to the world —a work he describes in the Preface as 'my *opus magnum* as pianist, organist, accompanist, conductor (opera and concert), composer (a very poor one), all-round general musician, and teacher since the age of twelve of singing.'

I have often suspected that many subjects supposed to be the special domain of experts have probably been far better handled by laymen. One thinks of battle-scenes depicted by Stendhal and Tolstoy; naval occasions and Empire building described by Kipling . . . and I might add music, as summed up in four stanzas by Baudelaire. Myself I should prefer a book on music written by the most technically ignorant yet most passionately music-loving frequenter of the 'Proms,' to one written by . . . well, never mind! And this idea is reinforced by the late Sir Walter Raleigh, who remarks in one of his delightful letters that the best books about literature have been written by men who have never been at a University. 'It ought not to be so,' he adds, 'but it is!'

When, however, for once in a way, as in this case, you get an expert who is not only past master of the technique of his subject, but who began life by taking up his stance on the firm ground of everyday experience —a man who has at least as much horse-sense as specialised intelligence—then it is another matter altogether. And one thing you can be sure of; the style of a book written by such a one will be as near perfection as need be.

This is not the place to review the book. Plenty of people will be doing that, and still more discussing it. Every voice producer, every victim of the voice producer, will be frantic about it. And every *really* great musician—of this I am as certain as of anything in life—

will agree that it is a work of genius. Three disquisitionary chapters precede the exercises ; (incidentally one asks oneself how the lifetime of one not yet passed his prime has sufficed to think out these amazing, apparently simple vocal calisthenics !) and of those three chapters the first two can be read by any cultivated person who does not loathe music and everything to do with it, just as you read a thrilling article on any concrete subject in a magazine. So too can the supremely wise little Appendix II (on the last page) called ' A suggested time-table for students of singing '—a typical example of ' horse-sense,' as I have ventured to call it.

In these few pages, which I wish the publishers could see their way to print separately as a pamphlet, you will find the condensed wisdom of a lifetime stated with almost staggering directness. What pitiless driving in, for instance, of a truism that average singers and average listeners to singing have never thought of : ' a singer *ought to be* the most intelligent and the most highly educated of all performing musicians ! ' ; after which he shows how pitiful are the ideals of too many of them. What grave, grim knowledge he has of the difficulties encountered in the pursuit of as noble, as elusive a quarry as art ! how the featherheadedness of those who think to run it easily to earth amazes him ! ' It is a tragedy of mortal life,' he says, ' that many people love singing who will never be singers. You must pause, fathers and mothers, before you let that girl of yours who is always singing about the house have her voice trained ' ; whereupon he gives his reasons for that warning. They are terrifyingly sound, and just what dozens of us would like to say to aspiring young people, and still more to their mamas. And what epigrams he coins incidentally—sparks that fly out gaily or fiercely as he hammers away at his red-hot thesis ! Talking of people who fall a prey to trick-conductors or singers—' eye-ticklers ' as he calls them—

he remarks that to understand and revel in beautiful musical tone is, except for the very few, an educative process both long and difficult, whereas 'the public of a *mere show* needs no education, *only lack of education*'; and he adds: 'let all concerned with training the young *bring up audiences*, and let them strangle at birth *mere spectators*' (ah, the quality of an audience—a desperately important matter though so few English people seem to realise it !). And then what fun there is in these introductory chapters, what a strong, rich, fearless vocabulary ! And, best of all, what insistence on the fact that music is not a thing to be tackled in a light-hearted, harum-scarum spirit, but a sacred profession.

If it does not sound impertinent to say so, I always knew he was a big man ; and of course as years went on, and as *he* went on—and, I might add, as certain other people who wear less well went *off*—one could but become more and more aware of the richness of his equipment, the steadiness of his stride, the sureness of his balance. But never till I had this book in my hand did I quite realise what we possess in him. And I cannot help wondering how many among those who will turn over its pages are of a stature to walk right round him, —as you might walk round a tract of country, thinking of its surface worth, its mineral worth, its positional worth—and take in what the whole man really amounts to ; . . . a man who makes it so difficult for you, too, by not swaggering ; who merely IS !

This musician and that leaves, or talks about leaving us, because it is becoming increasingly difficult to practise the art of music worthily in England. If the spirit of hustle and compromise—in a word, if industrialism—should eventually drive Henry Wood away, we may as well throw up the sponge. For that will mean that this country, whatever else it may be fit for, is no fit place for a true artist.

GERMANY AFTER THE WAR

Preface : written in 1928

In years to come, when Germany has fully recovered from the crippling effects of the war, it will be difficult to realise how dark was the road along which she had to grope her way back to the light. This might be said to a certain extent of all the nations involved, but of none in quite the same sense as of Germany and Austria. I therefore think it worth while publishing what I saw in these countries during a few summer months of 1922 and 1924.

At first I intended to recast this record in terms of to-day. But having often noticed that in so doing it is hard to avoid unconsciously doctoring one's original impressions with others gained subsequently, I think the more convincing plan is to let a tale re-tell itself, word for word, just as it was told at the time. This I have done here, and will only ask the reader to mentally put the clock back and say to himself : 'This was the Germany of so and so many years ago.' And, may I add, that in order to spare unmusical readers the outrage of finding themselves let in for a discourse on music, I have given this part of my impressions of the year 1922 in a special section entitled 'Musical Postscript.'

The Text : written in 1922

I

In the last days of July I started for Germany, not having set foot there since June 1914. The heart of

the expedition was to be Karlsbad, a depressing but, as regards its waters, unique place ; in Munich I proposed to hear fine music, and in Salzburg to play a modest part in an International Chamber-Music Festival. Both in Austria and Germany I have friends of many years standing ; there would be some chance of learning the real truth as to mid-European conditions, and it seemed possible that a record of my impressions might interest others. In any case to record them would be a pleasant holiday task.

Never, on the contrary, have I sat down to try and describe a given Streak of Life with such a heavy heart. Is it possible to make others understand what is going on beneath this crust of apparent prosperity ? If I say that with the pound at over 4000 marks instead of 20, one feels miserable, guilty, and helplessly ashamed, shall I be told this is morbid, that Germany has brought her fate on herself, and so on ? One remembers the *Lusitania* and that whole group of incidents, but on the other hand I recall how a friend of a friend of mine, an officer who had been a prisoner at Ruheleben, exclaimed when he got home : ' As soon as the war is over there's one thing you must do, ask the Governor to come and stay.' His family uttered cries of horror. . . . ' The Governor of Ruheleben ! Why surely he must be a fiend.' The officer stared : ' A fiend ? Why he's one of the best fellows I ever met ! ' It afterwards turned out that a former Governor of Ruheleben, quite at the beginning of the war, really *had* been a tyrant ; his reign had been short . . . but the Ruheleben legend was imperishable.

Or again, I remembered that in 1902 the photograph of an English soldier twirling a Boer baby on a bayonet went the round of the German Press, and I said to myself : ' In war-time facts and lies are inextricably mingled ; is it possible to ask an average reader to put that whole

past nightmare out of mind and look at to-day with impartiality, with the eye of bare humanity ? '

Then, meditating how to begin this chapter, a curious thing happened ; stowed away in an old pocket-book that by chance came abroad with me, I found a half-column roughly torn out of an English newspaper, and the headline is ' Dean Inge on the terms Germany needs,' this being an extract from an address to some International Peace Delegates who attended a service at St. Paul's. ' While the war lasted,' said the Dean, ' it seemed to have been caused by the deliberate wickedness of an abstract demon called Germany. The German was more or less honestly persuaded that similar abstractions called Russia, France, and England were the criminals. Now it seems to most people that they were all stark mad together.'

We know how hard it is, even in private quarrels —quarrels uncomplicated by the activities of a ' patriotic ' Press—to realise that the other party really does believe his own conduct was impeccable and you alone to blame. Hence, even without the Dean's reminder, I do not think it would have occurred to me to discuss the origins of the war with our late foe. Moreover, the Crown Prince's memoirs bear witness to the complete ignorance of the nation as to what was going on, either before or during the conflict. We must leave to Time the gradual rotting away of the veil woven between more than one people and the truth—a process which, I fancy, has already begun.

. . . . . .

Given the rate of the mark and the fact that the holiday season was in full swing, I travelled first class, and at once discovered that hundreds of people as little accustomed to these altitudes as myself were in the same case—especially Americans, many of whom, according

to the labels on their luggage, bore fine old Anglo-Saxon names such as Wolff, Hirsch, and Isaacssohn. Waiting for the breakfast-car to disgorge its first contingent, I stepped into an empty first-class compartment hard by ; on the seat was a filthy brush and comb nestling up against a bag of apricots, encircled by an old collar ; and, while I was taking a book out of my travelling bag, down came a shower of shrimps from the netting above. To-day, three weeks after this startling incident, I have found two on the floor of that bag.

The meals on the trains, though expensive, are excellent, and altogether the first impression of Germany is bewildering : factories in full swing, shops laden with goods, not a sign on the surface of want. The theatres are crammed, and if the first rows of stalls that used to cost three marks are now eighty marks, in our money this is about sevenpence, and there are plenty of profiteers, not to speak of foreigners (for all nations seem represented here now), who can afford that much. But I think any one who knew the country in the past must notice the change in manners. Except in the case of the Bavarians, who always were and still are the rudest of races, the old bow-wow style is gone. I could detect no dislike of the English—on the contrary ; but also none of the servility some have spoken of in the occupied area ; ordinary politeness and consideration is the prevailing note.

There was only one unpleasant incident ; and as I afterwards learned that two American maidens, wholly unprepared for the religious attitude towards music observed throughout Germany, had created a scene by lighting cigarettes at the darkest moment of ' Rhinegold,' it is possible that my neighbour during a certain performance of ' Egmont ' at Leipzig was predisposed to see red. Anyhow, sitting in the front row of stalls with my old friend Johanna Röntgen, who had not been to

the theatre for years, we occasionally exchanged remarks in the discreetest of whispers on the peculiarly vile acting. As we left the theatre a man came up to me and said, very rudely, ' Please take note that it is not customary in Germany, even if you hail from America and are *seated in the grand seats* (*vornehme Plätze*) to talk during the performance. Mind that ! ' A little staggered at being taken under any circumstances for an American millionairess, I argued the point, while he vociferated and constantly looked towards his wife for approval. But she saw he was on the wrong tack and making a fool of himself ; kindly words passed between us, and we parted fairly good friends, Johanna being much astonished at the incident. To me it was a revelation of the mentality of the vanquished. How sore they must be, and what limitless consideration do we owe them !

I saw three sets of old friends in Leipzig, all of whom figured in my book ' Impressions that Remained '—a fact I mention, not from egoism, but because the contrast between their then circumstances, and now, will bring home, perhaps, to readers of that book how things are to-day in Germany.

Professor Adolf Wach, now ' Excellenz,' widower of my dear friend ' Lili,' Mendelssohn's youngest daughter, is seventy-eight now, but fit, well, and pointful as ever. I dined with him and his only unmarried daughter, Mirzl, and the food was as in the old days, good and plentiful. I afterwards found out that this was an absolutely special occasion ; as a rule Wach only eats meat twice a week, his daughter never. Beer, wine, sugar, butter, nearly everything in short, has disappeared from that table, and if they sometimes drink tea, or real coffee, it is because friends send them a parcel. Now Wach has had a great career, is still earning money, has a big pension, in fact is what you may call very well off, yet this is how he lives now, owing to the rate of the mark.

Accommodation in Leipzig being scarce, the Town Council has cut off either end of his flat, the compensation being, of course, nominal. None is allowed to occupy a dwelling larger than his needs, and I heard of old friends of mine whose fine house is now crammed with uncles, aunts, and cousins they have not been on speaking terms with for years—a situation that might give rise to a Samson-like riddle, 'Out of war has come peace,' etc. . . . (I wonder ?)

Johanna Röntgen, now, alas ! almost a cripple (probably owing, in part, to eight years of semi-starvation) ought to be living comfortably on an income quite large enough for Leipzig, especially as a friend shares her little flat. As it is, but for the help of a former *pensionnaire*, an Englishwoman, I think she would starve altogether. Many days in the week she lives on two plates of soup, a little bread, and sham coffee. All who are past earning money are in this plight, the savings of a lifetime not being enough to keep body and soul together ; and the heart-breaking part of it is their serene courage and cheerfulness. Wach's daughter—in spirit so like her mother that often I felt as if forty years had been blotted out, and as if Lili and I, not Mirzl and I, were hymning Selma Lagerlöf's praises, or laughing at something absurd that had just happened—Wach's daughter, I was going to say, works with the Quakers, on whose bounty the lives of thousands in that stricken country depend, and here is one of the stories she told me.

There are two little old ladies who live beside the Pleisse, the river I was so nearly drowned in one night in 1887 when skating in the company of my big dog Marco. They come to Mirzl's office for relief twice a week, and one day last winter one of them said : 'We had a grand meal yesterday and I suppose ought not to come here to-day. You know the ice has been broken up just opposite our windows, to draw water, and suddenly

we saw a lot of crows fighting over something ; it was a splendid big fish they had somehow or other dragged up on to the ice ! So we drove them away and cooked it, and it was delicious . . . think, what a piece of luck ! ' Mirzl said they told this story quite simply and gleefully, apparently unconscious of its tragedy. She also remarked one day that the doom which has befallen Germany brings a certain consolation with it. ' Nowadays you simply can't think of material things as being of such very great importance,' she said, ' or as a source of pleasure. And the result is that your thoughts quite naturally turn in other directions.' I watched her dear, sensitive, amused face as she said this, and thought to myself, blessed indeed are the sorrowful if such is the fruit of their sorrow. ' I daresay we Germans needed all this,' she added. Perhaps they did . . . but perhaps we, too, need a lesson. If so, are we learning it ?

II

The difficulty in Germany is, that though it is a self-supporting country it needs money and sells its produce in the best market—that is abroad. The peasants keep as many eggs and vegetables as they need for home consumption and send the rest over the frontier. If, therefore, you want anything, you must pay, in German money, what the farmer's wife would get, say, in Holland. Hence an egg costs Johanna, whose income is a fixed quantity, the equivalent of £10 ! Or again take sugar. I had foolishly imagined that although they have lost their colonies Germany could surely extract sugar from beet-root ; but Wach explained to me that wages being what they are, beet-root is too costly to grow.

From him and another friend who figures in my memoirs, Tilde Limburger, now Tilde Tauchnitz, I heard a good deal about the German workman. This

woman, who was brought up in the greatest luxury, found herself obliged by force of circumstances, shortly after the outbreak of war, either to starve or reclaim from ruin her husband's book-publishing business. Of this job she has made a great success, lives on her business premises without a servant, and declares she never before knew freedom and peace, especially as two of her sons are doing well! Her report is that the German workman has forgotten the meaning of the word 'work,' that the Unions are encouraging laziness, and so on. She looks into the future with apprehension, and thinks that Wach's far more optimistic views might change, if he, like herself, were an employer of labour, though of course, like everyone who knows him, she allows that his opinion can but have weight.

Anyhow, everyone agrees that as long as you can earn anything in Germany all is well, for wages are very high. But a professor's pay is less than a workman's, and an old cashier at a Bank said to me: 'I am glad I am old, for I have seen much and learned much in my life . . . but my sons will learn nothing. Even if one could pay for their training learning does not pay . . . and one must live.'

To illustrate this point, here is a story told me by Hermann Bahr, the well-known dramatist and art historian. In the spring, having moved from his old home in Salzburg to Munich, he engaged two people to help him to unpack his library; a carpenter who opened the cases and occasionally put up a division in a shelf, and a highly trained student from the University who sorted and arranged the books. The student's charge was 15 marks an hour, the carpenter's 30 marks, and on the latter's bill the tram fares to and from Bahr's house were put in as extras. But altogether the outlook as regards intellectual life is desperate. In the past, art, science, and research of all kinds were liberally subsidised by the

State, and I remember how the head of the French Radiographic Centre (Nr. XIII.) stationed at Vichy during the war, comically bewailed to me the lack of German plates and lenses, ' the best and cheapest in the world.' Even up to quite recent times amazing sums have been voted towards publishing scientific works, so that years of labour may not be thrown away. But all this is coming to an end, and the chief sufferers will not be the Germans but the world at large.

About the Revolution. Wach told me it was a ' very good-natured affair, not what most people would call a real Revolution ' ; and Mirzl, who, with her Quakers, was at the railway-station when fighting was going on, declared they had met with every civility. ' We have no politics,' they said, ' we only want to get at the wounded ' . . . and they were allowed to go where they pleased. Most people agree that no one can be less disposed towards Communism than the German working class, but once the cost of life gets out of all proportion to wages, as seems likely, it will be another story. ' We intellectuals don't mind semi-starvation,' a certain writer said to me, ' we have other resources and need less food. But a man who works with his hands *must* eat well, and if this becomes impossible, then there will be a very different sort of Revolution to anything we have seen here yet ; the triumph of Bolshevism will be inevitable, and the Rhine will become the limit of civilisation; unless indeed it leaps it and involves France.'

Though wages are high, a sympathetic little adventure at Leipzig showed me how German life has been metamorphosed to the core. A very nice porter, a man of about thirty-five, with the quiet, patient look on his face of those who have faced Hell in the war, carried my luggage from the Customs to the cloak-room, a distance of some 600 yards. It was a grilling day, and though to be in Germany nowadays is to be for ever fighting a

tendency to indiscreet and offensive generosity, this time I gave way and asked my man what he would consider a really good tip. 'Give me what you think right,' he replied, and, when pressed, he added, 'we have high wages and one doesn't wish to be grasping.' I gave him fifty marks (about sixpence then), and as he seemed overwhelmed with gratitude I asked him to show me where I could get a glass of beer. He said there was a waiters' strike on, and that he was not sure where it could be had; and while he led me in vain to two or three likely places it suddenly dawned upon me that he had no up-to-date beer-knowledge. 'You see we don't drink beer now,' he said, apologetically, and when I reminded him of his own remark about wages he answered, 'Yes; but beer costs ten marks a glass and one can't go to such lengths as that!' Finally I learned that his maximum, 'wenn's hoch kommt,' would be *a couple of glasses a week*. It had been my intention, of course, to stand treat and drink together to better times, but being in a hurry I eventually gave him the ten marks and made him promise to spend it on beer. 'I promise,' he said, 'but first I must see you into the right tram'; which he did.

Now if anyone had told me that, under any circumstances whatsoever, beer would pass out of the German workman's life and that he would accept the fact with patience and good-humour, I would not have believed it. Would it not touch springs of pity in the hardest of hearts if the British workman were in the same position? But what fills me most with amazement is the absence of bitterness in all classes, the all-prevailing spirit of acceptance and quiet settling down to the task of rebuilding the fallen edifice. And this will be the dominant mood in the future, unless indeed the Germans are driven into war with France . . . which Heaven forbid.

A bad sign of the times is the startling change in the public services, once the best in the world. To send a

telegram, a registered letter, to book your luggage, all these things are as difficult and exasperating, and also as uncertain of result, as they are, and always were, in France. The police . . . but where *are* the police? Except in Bavaria I saw none on the streets. True, at the Central Station at Leipzig there were a few young men standing about, clad in green fancy-dress with a cock's feather in their hats, whom one might take for supers out of 'Freischütz.' Nor are they of much more use as officials ; woe betide you if you ask them the way to any given ticket office, so wildly incorrect will the directions prove to be! Eventually I learned to peer through pigeon holes for grizzled heads, the remnant of that old stock of reliable 'Beamten' we used to laugh at, but who yet might save the country were their race not doomed. Certainly the present breed of incompetent, upstart young clerk is a real danger.

But of all symptoms of degeneration the worst is, that according to information it is impossible to reject, the majority of business firms have gradually taken to a nefarious form of double book-keeping, one ledger being drawn up to show the State, for taxation purposes, the other kept for private use only. 'But for this we could not live,' said my informant.[1] As for the police, they are a general laughing stock, and disappear round a corner when any unpleasantness occurs. Upon my word, in Munich it was a relief to come across a being in a 'Pickelhaube' who looked like a real policeman.

I asked a few questions about the Crown Prince's Memoirs. Wach considered them genuine, and found them *simpatisch* and convincing ; rather to his surprise, for though the author was unknown to him, he had always found his facial angle unfortunate. We spoke of the son's criticism of his father's advisers, of their fatal habit

[1] I have since learned that such things happen in other countries . . . and in normal times too!

of doctoring truth for royal consumption (the thing that struck me so forcibly during my stay in Berlin in 1902–3), and Wach said he held the Emperor responsible to a great extent for the outbreak of war ; for though no doubt, personally, he desired peace, the constant sabre-rattling turned the public mind into a fatal channel—a subject of which more presently. Myself I thought the Memoirs suspiciously ' literary ' here and there, but I was told that the Crown Prince's sporting recollections, undoubtedly written by himself, are delightful, and show a certain literary capacity.

Hermann Bahr, more of an expert, perhaps, than Wach, declares that the editor of the Memoirs, Rosner, betrays himself too constantly for one to accept the book as genuine autobiography in the strictest sense ; but he agrees with me that if the Crown Prince *feels* this way, of which there can be no doubt, it doesn't much signify who arranged his parts of speech. The point of view matters, and that rings true.

As regards the question of *régime*, all in admitting that no one can judge in so short a time, my old conviction that Germany cannot be republican at core is strengthened, and I think that some day a chastened line of Hohenzollerns, strong on constitutional government, will preside over the destinies of Germany. Not the Kaiser of course—that page has been torn out of the book—but his descendants. And one cannot help wondering if then, at last, side by side with the gentle national heroine Queen Louise who braved Napoleon at Tilsit and won his respect, another heroine will stand —one whom cruel calumny pursued to her grave ; a Cassandra whom none would listen to, and whose liberal counsels, if followed, might have saved Germany (and Europe) from disaster. O ! for a German Lytton Strachey to do for the Empress Frederick what he did for her father—cleanse the one portrait from mud

as he scraped the other free from plaster of Paris and sugar !

III

The Austrian part of my adventures, consisting of a short excursion over the border to Salzburg, is a nightmare. Salzburg has always been a sort of show place without much moral or financial stability, a place where to exploit the unsophisticated sight-seer is a chief means of livelihood. What it is now, when, despite a fantastic currency and general collapse, several rich Jewish firms are making an attempt to found an annual Music Festival there—the idea being to lure across the border the summer hordes that flock to Munich, Bayreuth, and Ober Ammergau—what sort of pandemonium Salzburg is now, let the half-dozen English musicians relate, who, like myself, went thither to conduct their works. No one knows or cares what the packet of notes he has in his hand amounts to. Is this 50,000 Kronen or 500,000 Kronen ? but what matter, since in a few hours the latter note may only be worth the former. Cabmen, I am told, after arranging a price, drive you out into the country, and, arrived at a lonely spot, threaten to take out the horse, lead it home, and leave you in the wilderness unless you pay double !

There is no longer any standard at hotels. By luck and a very strange chance I found myself lodged at the Dom-Herr's—a sort of equivalent of Dean Inge, only Catholic and celibate, for Salzburg is an Archbishopric. I never saw him till the last day of my sojourn, and believe he was terrified at the predicament in which he found himself, with a stray Englishwoman billeted on him ; but his pretty niece looked after me perfectly. Several priests and sakristans skooted past me on the magnificent marble staircase, but I shall wonder to my dying day who were the legitimate occupants of the fine apartment

allotted me. Not having enough room for a very modest wardrobe I groped in some obscure cupboards, and among the things unearthed and piled together behind a curtain, whence they were secretly and silently removed next day, were a rather battered little wig of feminine gender, a very tall, thin, top-hat with a straight narrow brim (epoch 1850), and an egg-cup.

It is not only from hotels that all standard has vanished, as a fantastic story Bahr told me will illustrate. At the time of that migration from Salzburg I spoke of, his servant rushed in to inform him that the robber who had nailed up the packing-cases actually demanded 32,000 Kronen, which in old days would have been about £1200 but is now, I believe, in the neighbourhood of four shillings. Bahr said to himself, '32,000 Kronen? now why is that figure so firmly imprinted in my mind?' Then he laughed, for by an odd freak of memory he recalled that this was the exact sum he had paid in 1900 for a bit of land and the little country house he had built on it!

The removal of central authority in countries that do not possess the instinct of self-government has much the same effect everywhere. As in Ireland every farm-hand with a revolver is 'General,' so in Austria every waiter is 'Herr Ober,' that is 'Mr. Head Waiter.' But while at Salzburg, caught up in the languid whirl of the most sketchily-organised Festival I ever came across, one had such an overwhelming feeling of impending disaster, of starvation and death lying in wait, of a walking terror—not faced and coped with as in Germany but ignored by a helpless demoralised population—that any sense of humour one possessed refused to operate, and one's only idea was to get away as quickly as possible.

The Austrian is by nature gay, kindly, unbusiness-like, and perhaps a little superficial; to watch their present plight is to feel as you do when children or

animals are in danger. With a soil too poor for successful husbandry, with no coal for industries, the country never was and never can be self-supporting, but depended entirely on Hungary, Bohemia, and the various other provinces that comprised the Austrian Empire—provinces welded together, as the cynical old Emperor Francis Joseph was fond of remarking, by the cement of mutual hatred and jealousy. And now it is not likely that these are going to feed the former pet of Church and State in return for waste paper.

One cannot help wondering what the allied statesmen who 'settled' Europe really thought was going to happen to Austria, since neither France nor Italy would hear of her amalgamation with Germany. At the present moment the whole place is an out-at-elbows gambling hell. Bankers, hotel-porters, ministers, everyone, gambles in marks or francs. Since ruin bars every road, why forgo the fun of a flutter?

I had many talks with one who was a member of the Government at the time of the Hapsburg collapse—strange to say an impassioned golfer. He told me that Austria is as little disposed towards Bolshevism as Germany, that the Marxian theory is exploded, and the working class in a very strong position. But if a man, whether small official or workman, has nothing to eat, he will inevitably become a Bolshevist in practice—that is, a robber—and doctrines are but the second stage of accomplished facts. This ex-Austrian Minister holds that the recovery of European health depends upon Russia, and he marvelled, as well he might, at that section of the English Press that tried to stultify Mr. Lloyd George's efforts at Genoa. As for Austria, in his opinion there is only one thing to be done now, the Allies must administer it 'as you English administer Egypt.' But in any case, he declared, the eight-hours day won't work in Austria, firstly because the Austrians are poor workers,

and, secondly, because there is so little work to be done. Near his home there is a line that runs two day-trains and two night-trains, and formerly two men did twelve hours so-called work each at the little station. Now it is divided up between three men, one of whom is paid for eight hours in which practically nothing happens—a poor lion without a Christian !

I could not help trying to elicit a little last-act gossip from this interlocutor. He told me the Emperor Karl, though not an intellectual light, was a thoroughly good fellow, and had always believed he could pull off a separate peace, but of course the Germans held him in too tight a grip. He spoke of the old Emperor Francis Joseph's reluctance to set fire to the train : 'You don't know what war is,' he would say to his Hotspurs, 'I *do*' ; but his own General Staff and that of Berlin forced his hand. 'Not the Emperor William ?' I asked. 'No, no,' he said ; and he then told me that at the fatal Council, when it was debated whether Germany should, or should not, back up the ultimatum to Serbia, the Emperor William was absolutely against it. At length, overborne by his Staff, he took the line of Pilate, washed his hands of the matter, registered his protest, and departed for the North Sea. All of which confirms the account of these proceedings given by the Crown Prince in his Memoirs. And, as lay-politician, one cannot help thinking that if England had made less of a mystery of her commitments towards France, so that even a Bethmann-Hollweg could not have cherished a belief in our neutrality, then perhaps the German Emperor might have plucked up courage to defy his Staff, even at the risk of his crown—as his grandfather did after Sadowa in 1866—and there would have been no war.

It was difficult to realise, when at last Karlsbad was

reached, that the place was no longer German. Yet the getting there had yielded ample proof that things were no longer as they had been, and I found myself wishing that people like Mr. Erskine Childers, de Valera, and their dupes could see these little Central European Republics at work. Never have I more admired Ulster for flatly refusing to cut the painter between herself and a great Empire. The idea of miniature autonomy seems to be not so much to paddle your own canoe as to scuttle that of your neighbour, and firmly to ignore the A.B.C. provisions that the experience of mankind has found necessary to the intercommunication of nations.

To penetrate into Czecho-Slovakia *viâ* Eger, which was once a well-oiled international turnstile, is now a terrific business. You step from the German train on to a narrow gangway, as from a steamer ; your passport is then whisked away from you, and you are bidden to turn to the right and cease remonstrating (in no other land I have visited are the traveller and his passport divorced, so there is a good deal of remonstrance). You then arrive in a big shed, where the sight of the contents of trunks being tossed into the air like hay and rammed back anyhow (for the train is waiting) warns you what to expect. Finally, you perceive a crowd, swaying, struggling, shrieking round a fenced-off corner of the shed, some mounted on boxes in order to see over the fence, which is about five feet high, others (small people these) clinging to it, and hopping desperately now and then in the hope of catching a glimpse of their lost passports. For in this corner is a table at which three individuals are examining our credentials, with what efficiency the reader may guess, since no attempt is made to compare the owners with their registered descriptions. Names are called out from time to time, and eager, clutching hands extended ; but as many of the names are foreign, and the Czech frontier-police lack cosmopolitan training,

it is hard to recognise your own name—even if you are not stone deaf, which may be the case.

Aware that no other reading is admitted on the Continent, I began calling out 'Smitt . . . Smitt' at intervals as soon as I got near the barrier. But even this failed to convey anything to the Czech mind, and again and again I saw my passport tossed aside as unclaimed ; till at last, only three being left and the train about to start, I literally shrieked, '*Da ! da ! da !*' and eventually was united to my property. Safe in the train, I and two Americans—real Americans for once—chanted in passionate unison, 'Never, never again will I come to this country ! '

But one will, partly because of the music at Prague, and chiefly for what you can get nowhere else, the Karlsbad waters. I had not been there for twenty-two years, and, as then, one's heart leapt at the sight of the many yellow faces clustered round the springs. Evidently the war had left the faith of the great international liver-brigade unshaken. The place had not changed much, and once more the old problem presented itself, why are there so many Rabbis in Jewry ? You do not see flocks of priests at French waters, or of clergymen at our own wells, but at Karlsbad every tenth person is a Polish Rabbi—that is, a thin hideous individual in a long, greasy, black silk coat, jackboots, and a flabby felt hat, three sizes too small, with a wide brim. His hair, worn long, is either black, grizzled, or fiery red, and over each ear a carefully trained lock of it hangs like a creeper. This lock is no longer curled into a corkscrew and dripping with oil as it used to be, but I know that it still indicates something very creditable connected with the Talmud. Similarly the wives of these Rabbis, who used to wear black velvet fronts, it being considered immodest for a married woman to exhibit her hair, now wear ordinary Gentile fringes. But lest

you should mistake these for hair grown on the premises, the fringe is worn *inverted*—that is, with the ridge of silk or cotton in a straight line above the eyebrows. One would not judge the love-charm of these ladies to be dangerously excessive, yet . . . for him she obviously had fascination, and—O still greater marvel—he for her ! Anyhow the above solution of the hair problem combines modesty with progress.

IV

I had been told that the prices at Karlsbad were terrific, and hotel-keepers both rapacious and unfriendly. But at certain inns, such as Cook's selection, the Nürnbergerhof, at which I stayed, they endeavour with success to meet your limitations and make you both welcome and comfortable—a fact worth recording if Karlsbad happens to be the 40th Article of your Faith.

The chief drawback to the place, according to my feeling, is not material but spiritual, for a great injustice has been done here ; and however unavoidable injustice may be it is always distressing to witness. If ever a territory was German, it is this so-called Egerland, the part of Bohemia that lies beyond the Saxon frontier. Germans have been there for hundreds of years, Czechs never ; Germans built up the series of great watering-places, Marienbad, Karlsbad, Frazensbad, and you may travel for miles and miles, nearly as far as Prague, without striking a Czech settlement. M. Clémenceau, who has been eighteen times to Karlsbad and probably deplores having to give up the habit now, writes in his book, ' Au Fil des Jours,' of *le Bohème allemand* ; but to use the words ' German Bohemia ' is forbidden to-day by the authorities ! I believe that when the new Czecho-Slovak Republic came into being, conscious of the advantages of a homogeneous population the Czechs were

not over-anxious to cling to the Egerland ; but the Allies' objection to increasing German territory left them no choice—and now, as often happens, the line taken looks very like oppression.

For instance, in districts where the population is preponderantly German the schools are, of course, German ; but Czech instructors teach the children to execrate their own people, and history, because it includes mention of the Hapsburgs, is severely let alone. Again, early in the war the Austrian Government issued a six per cent. war loan, and thousands of people, mostly Germans (as being the wealthier section of the population) not only put all their savings into it but borrowed money of the banks to invest. And now, though all debts to the old Austrian State are rigorously enforced, this war-loan is repudiated.

The Germans say that the deliberate policy is to break them in the business world. It is impossible to go into this allegation here, but there can be no doubt as to the attitude adopted towards the Bohemian aristocracy, one of the oldest and most honourable in Europe, whose estates were admirably administered, whose castles are full of art treasures, and who admittedly represented as completely as is possible to human nature the ideal landowner. The first action against the nobles was to do away with the law of entail ; the next, more especially all along the German frontier (though such estates are scattered throughout Bohemia), was to decree compulsory sales at pre-war values—which are to those of to-day as one to twenty—and nationalise these properties. And as the expensiveness and inefficiency of State Control as compared to private management is the same all the world over, the result can be imagined.

I remarked to one such complainant that, not to speak of Ireland, many of our own old families are now obliged to sell their property ; the answer was that in

England this is the natural result of taxation after a great war, but that in Bohemia, where they go so far as to pick out special domains for spoliation, it is a case of malignant legislation aimed at a class against whom it is impossible to level the charge of absenteeism, maladministration, or even inimicalness to the new *régime*. The President, remarked this informant, sees the folly of this policy, but the real power is in the hands of groups, who, without having the country behind them, really rule it.

To sum up the position : Bohemia consists of about eight million Czechs and Slovaks (who, by the by, have more difficulty in understanding each other's language than an Englishman and a Dutchman), about three and a half million Germans, and some odd millions of Poles, Hungarians, Russians, and Jews ; but instead of endeavouring to win over the Germans, the idea seems to be to extinguish dangerous rivals—a risky policy, as President Kruger found out, when the minority is more highly civilised than their masters.

All Germany really asks for is, that in parts of the country like the Egerland, where 91 per cent. of the population is German, self-government should be granted them. I was reminded that England is doing no less in her own dependencies, and thought of what the Indian patriot Sastri has been saying all over the British Empire about the future of India, not ripe yet, in his opinion, for independence. 'Meanwhile,' he said, 'be wise, and above all be generous. Govern us so, that when the time comes for making our choice, we shall decide of our own free will, as your Colonies decided, to remain part of your great Empire.'

This last stage of a sojourn on the Continent would open any eyes to the impossibility of satisfying everyone, and to the amount of injustice that must accompany the settlement of great and complicated issues ; one asks oneself how many millions of people in Europe to-day

are writhing under a sense of wrong. As Goethe remarked : ' Realisation (" Erfahrung ") is almost always a caricature of the idea.' While I am writing the mark has fallen to 8000 to the £, and when German notes become as worthless as Austrian, which seems likely, will anyone still maintain, I wonder, that it is a case of shamming sick ? Probably ; for with the European rot that has set in, reason seems to have fled from some of her most cherished abodes, and left the field to confusion of ideas, clarified, if the term may be permitted, by hatred. Let him who, in spite of all temptations to belong to other nations is still an Englishman, congratulate himself as never before, for there is only one tolerable place to live in now—England !

I wrote the above in August ; since then the failure of the London Conference has met with instantaneous response on the part of the forces of disorder. Prices are rising, so are wages, factories are dismissing half their hands, small shops are closing down, and there is on all sides a dull sense that catastrophe is imminent. Passing through Leipzig on September 2nd (it was Fair time) strange individuals were to be met on the street—lads in linen blouses, shorts, and sandals, and older men in tailed coats covered with oxidised silver buttons, low cut waistcoats, bell trousers, and top hats, from beneath the brim of which one lock of hair sagged in a carefully thought-out loop down to the eyebrow. I imagined that some athletic competition must be on, and further that ' Chevalier ' actors must be strangely popular to go about thus clad in broad daylight. It turned out that both the athletes and the costers are communists, the latter ' the worst type we have,' said my companion ; and indeed such villainous countenances, such low-down swagger, such impossible creatures altogether, I have never met with.

On the journey home the first-class carriages were full of third-class passengers, who, on the half-hearted remonstrances of the guard—the old type of decent German guard—quite openly handed him 200 marks apiece . . . and the incident closed. Also, by the way be it said, my luggage, to book which at Leipzig took me and a friend just one hour, has not yet arrived ! . . .

Such is Germany to-day. But until rotten ice has actually given way and engulfed the skaters it is open to all to point to the unbroken surface. And in this case the skaters are all Europe.

Meanwhile, as he had the first word, let Dean Inge —represented, as I said, by a torn half-column of newspaper that chanced to go abroad with me—have the last word in this record of a traveller's impressions. His final remark to that Peace Delegation was :

' It is said that Germany shows no signs of repentance . . . but has repentance been made easy to her ? The old Christian way is to overcome evil with good. It is not always successful. But a method that has never succeeded, that never will succeed, is to try and cast out devils by Beelzebub the Prince of the Devils.'

Musical Postscript : written in 1922

I

As I began by saying, the true objective of this visit to the Continent was Karlsbad waters, the taste of which one hoped to wash away with subsequent draughts of music at Munich and Salzburg. The way to Karlsbad takes you through Leipzig, and though the summer orchestra at the Stadt Theater is in every sense but a ' scratch ' orchestra, who would miss a chance of seeing Goethe's ' Egmont ' with Beethoven's incidental music, especially if when last you heard it you were young, enthusiastic,

and totally devoid of either experience or critical faculty ?

A few pages back I spoke of an unpleasant yet rather interesting experience at that performance. The play itself I found still more interesting but not wholly satisfactory. It may be recalled that Beethoven wrote the music at Goethe's instigation (' here a drum,' ' there fifes in the distance '), and that every detail of the stage management was prescribed by the author, including the sort of Jacob's ladder leading direct to the scaffold up which Egmont runs lightly to his death, and at the top of which Clärchen (who has poisoned herself dead in a previous scene) appears, while the curtain is falling, as a symbolic figure of Liberty with a wreath in her hand.

I wonder how ' Antony and Cleopatra ' would affect one if both the title parts were execrably played, and if Antony's mouthings and mannerisms rendered it impossible to catch a word ? Such was the fate meted out to Egmont and Clärchen on this occasion ; indeed, the only person who acted well was Clärchen's mother, a woman well on in years, who had evidently learned her job in days when people knew that the only road to supremacy is schooling.

Except the Overture the music sounded rather thin, as ' occasional ' music—even by such a genius as Beethoven—will sometimes sound a century later. The play itself struck me as full of good situations, and not without human interest in spite of its conventionality ; the end of the second act, where the wicked Duke of Alva, after luring the headlong young patriot rebel into all sorts of verbal indiscretions, suddenly touches a bell, whereupon a curtain, drawn aside, reveals a wall of halberdiers and Inquisition monks barring every exit . . . this really gives one a thrill. But the third act fizzles out ; and as you go home, indignantly recalling the extreme length of everyone's speeches (Clärchen

and her mother being at least as verbose as Egmont and the Duke of Alva), you fall away from an earlier impression that the play ought to be well cut and given in England.

The Munich Festival is a long business, extending over some two and a half months, and including extraordinarily perfect performances of Wagner and Mozart. At the end of it a calamity is due ; Bruno Walter, probably the finest opera conductor alive to-day, who throughout the war kept the flag of the highest form of musical art flying, puts down his bâton, and Munich will know him no more. Various reasons are given, one, I believe, being the fact that he is a Jew. Music cannot possibly get on without Jews, but for the moment only such as can proffer some sort of claim to being ' full-blood Germans ' need apply. Moreover, Walter himself is not anxious to stay, and for this he, too, gives various reasons, one being extreme fatigue ; but I think the chief is that in the future not only must bricks be made without straw, but the pretence be kept up that they are the best bricks. And this men like Walter will not do.

The cruellest result of the war, or of the Versailles Treaty perhaps, is the apparently inevitable destruction of a musical civilisation it has taken Germany centuries to build up, and of which all other nations were beneficiaries. Even to-day this debt-laden State does much for research, for Art and Science, and I could cite incidents that would astonish the sort of person who holds that man lives by bread alone. ' If a Government can vote a quarter of a million marks,' such a one would exclaim, ' towards the publishing of a biological work it has taken fifteen years to complete, it cannot possibly be in such a very bad way ! ' But to us who know Germany, there is nothing surprising in hearing, as I did a little old Leipzigerinn remark, ' I'd far rather go

on living on three plates of soup a day than give up my Gewandhaus Concert *abonnement*.'

Nevertheless, despite willingness to make untold sacrifices to the god of music, the fact remains that no German Opera can afford to-day to pay first-class artists, nor maintain the tradition of perfection, including limitless rehearsal, which giants of the past, Bülow, Levi, Richter, and Mottl, established, and which men like Schuch, Mahler, and Walter carried on. And being a musician, I think I am entitled to feel, as I do, that of all the tragedies the war has brought about none is greater than this. Yet even as I write I do not despair of the future ; the German conviction that where music is concerned no trouble, no expense can be excessive, is so deeply engrained, that as soon as better times dawn it is bound to reassert itself. This is certain ; as certain as that England will never spend a penny on music. On tangible things, such as pictures, or drainage, yes ; but not on something you can't grasp, exhibit, and boast about, such as musical perfection!

Meanwhile what is now going on in Munich, though but an after-glow, a last effort before, with the falling mark, the house crumbles, is very fine. I did not see Walter's ' Meistersinger,' of which countrymen of mine who did see it maintain it was the finest ' Meistersinger ' they have ever witnessed ; but I saw parts of ' The Ring,' produced, I am proud to say, by my great friend the incomparable Anna Mildenburg. I do not claim to be a Wagner expert ; only those who have loved, revelled, soaked in Wagner's music for years can judge a performance. Now of all his works the only one I really love, and that only with ruthless cuts, is ' Tristan ' ; hence I can only say of the (to me) insupportable uncut ' Ring,' that this time the Rhine-maidens really swam, and that the Walküre, not hunched together under a tree but dispersed about the rocks, gave one the impression of

a flock of wonderful birds of prey momentarily expecting a dinner of dead heroes. The noise they made was hideous in its realistic violence, and once more I felt how much more enjoyable Wagner is in the concert-room, with no singers in action, than in his proper place—a heresy not peculiar to myself.

The instrumental rendering, under Muck's rather dry leading, was fine, as far as the orchestra 'bonnet' allowed one to judge. People may say what they like; this device, designed to help out Wagner's merciless treatment of the human voice, blunts the fine edge of the tone; and as for the gain to 'illusion' (a consideration one cannot help suspecting was dragged in as an afterthought), surely it is unnatural, hysterical, and a breach with all-saving sanity to hide away the music-makers in this fashion? Personally, I love to see the fiddlers fiddling, the drummers rolling; and though a *poseur* at the conductor's desk is always a nauseating spectacle, he does not focus attention in an orchestra pit as on a concert platform. Yes; it was bitter to be deprived of the joy of watching the orchestra—the one resource open to people who feel as does the present writer during the æons of an uncut 'Ring.'

At Munich I luckily came in for an almost perfect performance of 'Così fan tutte,' under Walter. Wise old Angelo Neumann used to say that anyone can conduct Wagner—an extreme statement, of course; but, surely, the real test of a conductor's quality is Mozart. In this case the covered-in orchestra seems to me indefensible; why, in the name of a false conception of the word 'illusion,' numb and stifle those exquisite, most utterly discreet sonorities? You might as well shut up a pair of butterflies in a cage and cover it with green baize lest the fluttering wings might give someone a stiff neck. But it seems ungracious to strike any note save of delight and gratitude in connection with that wonderful evening

in the beautiful little Residenz Theater, a masterpiece of rococco, where you have the benefit of the revolving stage—that fascinating, and, in the right sense of the word, childlike contrivance; direct heir of the transformation scene in the pantomime and of the fairy tale.

II

A curious thing is happening here in Germany. For the time being Wagner seems to have lost his hold over those who once were his most ardent apostles, namely the intellectuals. Here are some of the incidents that led me to this conclusion.

I think I have already said that my old friend Professor Wach, Felix Mendelssohn's son-in-law, is still a potent factor in the Leipzig music world. Well, this man of conspicuously cool, objective judgment remarked to me that the waning of Wagner's influence is one of the signs of the times. Again, in Munich I had much good talk with Hermann Bahr, the well-known author, whose wife, Anna Mildenburg—once an unequalled exponent of Wagner's great tragic rôles—is now a Professor at the Munich Dramatic School, busy handing on the tradition to the youth of to-day. Not exactly remembering in which direction Bahr's tastes ran, I remarked in connection with the Munich Festival, that from the indifference and boredom of my youth towards Wagner, I had travelled since the war to violent aversion. 'Oh!' he said, 'I have felt like that for many years; the whole thing seems to me preposterous now . . . but I don't say so to my wife!' (Here followed the usual exception in favour of a severely-cut 'Tristan.')

Finally, in Salzburg, when I repeated the above remark of Bahr's to my Austrian publisher, his comment was: 'We have all got to that point now. I don't suppose anyone ever raved about Wagner as I did, but

now I can't sit out an act of any single opera of his.' 'Not even "Tristan"?' I asked. 'Not even "Tristan,"' was the reply.

These three are all representative men, and I wonder how many Germans of to-day share their views. The specially well-advertised, magnificently produced Wagner-Cycle I saw at Munich was designed, like the Salzburg Festival, to rope in all the Ober Ammergau and mountain-climbing crowd (and I may remark that all America is on the Continent just now). Night after night, so I was told, the House was packed, though mainly with visitors, which is no test of what happens on normal occasions. But in my own mind I have no doubt that the hypnotic trance is wearing off, and that in a few years' time, in spite of some immortally beautiful music, Wagner will be found, as regards his scheme of music-drama, to be a product of that casting overboard of discretion and self-restraint, that ruthless systematic ignoring of the limits of the achievable, that self-assertion and megalomania, in short, which led through Pan-Germanism to the temporary ruin of Europe.[1]

The only part of the Salzburg Festival I attended was a series of international chamber concerts in which we English composers, to use a colloquialism, kept our end up, I think. Anyhow a Viennese authority congratulated me on the healthy rhythmic and melodic life in our work as contrasted with the doleful ditties they are now stringing together in the land of Schubert, Offenbach, and Johann Strauss.

[1] In justice to myself I should like to say that the 'aversion' was a passing result of the war, nor was I the only person similarly affected, though few seem to recall the fact now! On the other hand, the latter part of the above paragraph summarises, but with far too great definiteness, a dim feeling that has always haunted the writer; namely that there is a certain kinship between Wagner's Art and the ultimate projects of Napoleon (E. S., 1928).

Anything more anæmic, more hopeless than nine-tenths of the Austrian music dribbled out to us in exasperating spoonfuls at Salzburg I have never heard. The only thing it resembles is a piteous spectacle familiar to every golfer, a half-squashed worm buried up to its middle, too feeble either to crawl out or to withdraw the rest of its poor carcase into safety. Some say the cause is the appalling conditions of life in Austria ; if I believed that I should not have the heart to write about it thus. But it is not so. This school of impotent wrigglers came into being before the war, their hero being one Webern, much advertised in Austria as Schönberg's most talented pupil.

The phrase ' musical insanity ' was once coined by Walter in connection with Schönberg's later manner, and we all know Schiller's drastic remark about the ' Epigonen,' who imitate the way the Master clears his throat and spits, and think thereby to do him honour. One could not fancy that Schönberg would appreciate this only too faithful rendering of some of his more intimate habits ; but he does, for in 1912, in Vienna, I attended a concert of works by his pupils conducted by himself. By degrees the suppressed merriment of the audience merged into uncontrollable laughter, and eventually the orchestra marched stolidly off the platform. Then Schönberg bellowed out various furious remarks, there were jeers, and a free fight all round. Finally, the lights were turned out, and we all had to struggle in the pitch-dark garderobes for our personal effects.

Webern and his followers live on this sort of thing. A quartet of his was played at Salzburg, and here is the formula. One long-drawn note upon the bridge of the first violin (pause) ; a tiny scramble for viola solo (pause) ; a pizzicato note on the 'cello (long pause) ; an excruciating chord in harmonics, *pianissimo* (a very long pause) ; a soft thud with the back of the bow on the body of the

'cello. Then another pause, after which the four players get up very quietly, steal away, and the thing is over.

And now snorts and laughter are heard in the audience, while four furious admirers clap and yell amid not ill-natured giggles, till, at length, Webern appears. I never saw an angrier man ; he is about thirty-five, dry and thin as though pickled in perennial fury, and erect as a ramrod. It was amusing to see him face up to each of his four executants as if he were going to kill them, then relent, wring their hands bitterly, glare defiance at the audience, and rush off stiffly into the artists' room.

Thereupon, as usual, one suddenly became aware of a sixth furious man (who I subsequently learned was an architect and stone-deaf),[1] passionately reproaching the audience, and more especially a certain Capellmeister there present, for laughing and spoiling everything. Most ungrateful, since but for these ever-recurring scenes, the school, which no one takes seriously except Schönberg, would have fizzled out long ago.

I shall not easily forget the surprise, the utter relief, when the Amar-Hindemith Quartet, a quite newly-constituted group, suddenly plunged, with a quartet by their viola, Hindemith, into the sea of real music. The composer, a Frankfurter, is a very young man, and the world will hear of him. This is music of immense power, of gaiety, of fury, superb as to technique, and of genuine string-quartet invention. Exquisite in sound, it is irresistible as a mountain torrent, and carried the audience off its feet. No wonder ! behold the web of carefully constructed discords, of artificial harmonic writhings hither and thither which some people think ' modern,' broken through at last by a real temperament ! One did not stop to consider what his ' idiom ' was, although I recollect a strong sense of tonality all through. As a fine musician present said to me : ' He does not need

[1] I have since learned that he is a splendid man ; a Mæcenas.

all that rot' (in German 'Kram'), and, of course, as always happens when people have something of their own to say, the receipt according to which the music was fashioned blinked out of sight.

Remains to be seen how the Amar-Hindemith Quartet tackles other music. If, however, they came to England solely to perform that one work of the young Rhineländer's, it would be worth while. I only heard it once, and possibly, as someone said, there may have been lengths here and there. But if you have listened to bosh for several days and suddenly strike a work of genius, you don't feel in the carping mood.

That quartet was the last item I heard at the Salzburg Festival, and I am glad it happened so ; for the reflection it left with me is, that terrible though the situation in Germany undoubtedly may be, a country that can produce music such as this need not fear the future.

Epilogue : written in 1928

In 1924, with only four days at my disposal, I suddenly started for Leipzig, having been seized with an irresistible desire once more to hear the Matthew Passion in the Thomas Kirche, of which Church Bach had been organist. There it had been given for the first time ; there, ever since Mendelssohn had rediscovered and revived this almost forgotten work, its performance on Good Friday had been the apex and the conclusion of the music-year. In that organ-loft, as reward for a year's study of an instrument for which I had no talent, I had played second violin at the last desk one Good Friday forty-five years ago ! On other occasions I had sung in the chorus ; and sometimes, seated just behind the soprano soloist, would sound a note under my breath. For beautiful as was the voice, inspired as was the artist, Eugenie Schumann's great friend, Marie Fillunger, was liable to attacks of nervousness, and this office of ensuring

that she should not start in a wrong region was confided to me by another friend of Fillunger's, Lisl von Herzogenberg.

If I speak of Lisl here, as though assuming with some arrogance that my readers have read my memoirs, it is because these Good Friday performances of her beloved Matthew Passion are so closely interwoven with memories of her and the old days, that on that afternoon, more than thirty years after her death, I found myself looking across the nave towards the place where the Herzogenbergs always sat, and could almost fancy, with a contraction of the heart, that I saw the pale face with its aureole of golden hair silhouetted against a pillar. So ineffaceable is the scar left by a deep passionate friendship of one's youth when it breaks! This, this is Death in Life—saddest of all the days that are no more !

During the thirty-six hours I was in Leipzig I spent every available moment with Wach and Mirzl, and could discover no mental falling-off in this man of eighty. As for his physical condition, we walked to the Church and walked back again, and during the performance this is what happened. He sat next me, his vocal score glued to one eye, (thus he had read ever since I had known him) absolutely immovable, except for noiselessly turning the pages, during the whole three hours the Passion lasts ! Now if I am obliged to sit still for a long time I get stiff, and cannot help occasionally crossing and uncrossing a leg. But each time it had to be done I felt shamed by the motionless figure beside me—a German St. Kevin !

Now and again I gave a discreet glance round the packed Church, and was astonished at the huge percentage of quite young people, a thing you do not see in England. When the war broke out these will have been children of any age from six to ten, and it was sad to see the story

of those years written in their physique and in the expression of their faces. But young or old, all were rapt and motionless as Wach ; an absorption none can realise who has not seen Germans listening to music. When the interval came there was no interchange of smiles, no whispering about mundane affairs, and later on, at the exit, no 'see you to-morrow at tea!' All behaved as though this were what it really is, a religious service by which their hearts were wholly possessed.

The start of the first Chorus, much, much slower than we take it here (for passion can afford to go slow where superficiality must hurry), made my heart leap into my mouth. I had forgotten how singers to whom, as to the listeners, this music is an integral part of their lives, sing that Chorus. It is the difference between the civil 'How do you do?' of good acquaintances and the meeting of lovers after a long parting! And then the Chorale that runs through it, ringing clarion-like out of the gallery above our heads, sung by the 'Thomaner' —that is, the pupils of the music-school hard-by where Bach was Cantor. No boys attack that Chorale like these lineal descendants of the very boys who first sang it two and a half centuries ago! The whole performance was on these lines. I know not what to call the thing they have, the thing we have not. It is something in the blood. Perhaps it is simply real love of music.

Three old friends of mine whom I was destined never to see again were in the Thomas Kirche that day. I think this was the very last Passion Johanna Röntgen was able to go to, though she may have heard it once or twice on the wireless before she died. Tilde Tauchnitz, still a youngish woman, but broken down by a certain tragic aftermath of the war of which I knew nothing, died two years later, and the same year saw the end of my beloved Wach.

When Good Friday came round I had been thinking of him all day, wondering if he would be able to go to the Passion, for I knew he had not been well. He did go—to the first half at least—and then, indignant with Mirzl for insisting that that was enough, went home and looked over the final proofs of a big legal work he had just finished. After supper he read aloud to her, as usual, and went to bed feeling particularly well. Next morning when they called him he was unconscious, and he died peacefully on Easter Sunday.

. . . . . .

It has seemed to me worth while to speak of this flying visit to Germany (I have not been there since) partly because, with Wach, the last survivor of that quartet who were the core of my Leipzig life, the Wachs and the Herzogenbergs, is gone ; but chiefly because of a reflection that came to me as I was writing this Epilogue.

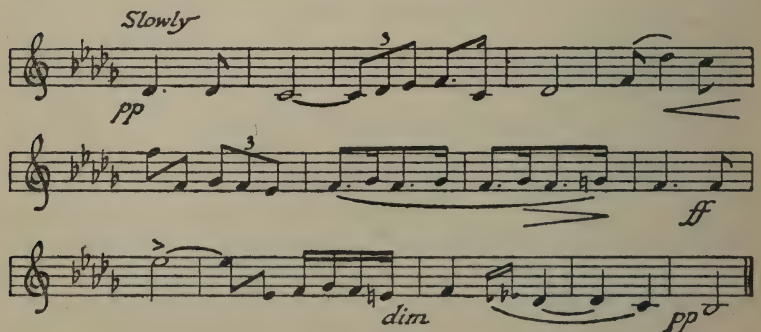
When I went to Leipzig, as a girl, to study music, six years had elapsed since the close of Germany's victorious war with France. I now found myself in the same country exactly six years after her defeat in a far more terrible war. The nation was no longer under the harrow to the same extent as in 1922 ; the enormous recuperative power of the race had already made itself felt and conditions were fairly normal. Thus it seemed permissible to form conclusions, and the chief conclusion that forced itself upon me was, that this people had learned the uses of adversity. Certain traits that used to get on the nerves of other peoples—traits directly stimulated by the Prussian military mania to which, alas, the whole nation had lent itself—seemed to have disappeared. Personally I am an absolute believer in the change of heart—one might call it a change of orientation —of which more than one of their statesmen have spoken ;

and remembering what happened in France in 1815 notwithstanding the glamour that Napoleon had left behind him, we must allow that such changes have happened in history. Nations can have too much even of the good thing that militarism gone mad seemed to the past generation of Germans !

To-day we are all in a chastened mood, and no one cares to pontificate about the future. All the same I have courage to quote, as last word, a remark I made recently in a certain little book of Greek travel : ' a people that has innate love of hard work and noble music is founded on a rock.' And it pleases me to see that even in 1922, when things were at their worst, I was of my present opinion—namely, that whatever Germany may have lost in the war, her future will be greater even than her past.

AUGUSTA HOLMES, PIONEER

I WELL remember the day when, as far as I was concerned, the thought of Augusta Holmes suddenly sprang into life. It was after luncheon in the smoking-room at Farnborough Hill, the Empress Eugénie's country house. In one of the ample maroon-leather armchairs, well filling every cubic inch of it, reclined a very great artist, the well-known amateur contralto of the Second Empire, Madame Conneau, wife of the Emperor's physician. Lazy, absent-minded, benevolent, unregretfully conscious of having partaken of *gâteau-mille-fleurs*—a Farnborough Hill speciality forbidden to the stout—there she lay; and while we others were talking and smoking, suddenly that wonderful voice of hers, in which dwelt the soul of all deep, soft instruments, breathed forth in an undertone the following melody:



The wild, voluptuous line of the music carried words of like poignancy. Here is the first stanza:

Elle m'a, de son clair regard,
Plus aigü que n'est une lame,
Percé, comme avec un poignard,
L'âme !

It was about a Spanish lover who hid himself at midnight beneath his mistress's balcony in order to catch in a bowl and mingle with drops of his own blood ' les pleurs qu'elle jette au passé sombre '—therewith to brew the love-philtre which was to bring him peace, though whether by attainment of his desires or death the song does not say. And words and music were by Augusta Holmes.

I had heard vaguely of this Irish girl, who, in hatred of England and love for France, had settled in Paris, and latinised her name with an *accent grave* into something that, as spoken by French mouths, sounded more or less like ' Haul-maize.' But her reputation was based mainly, so I was told, on songs and seduction. And as I myself had fallen almost immediately under the spell of the larger musical forms ; as, too, in my youth I foolishly considered personal charm a weapon unworthy an artist, whereas nowadays I think, with the Empress's old *Dame d'Honneur* Madame le Breton, that ' cela ne gâte rien,' I took no interest in Augusta Holmes.

That melody killed indifference. Madame Conneau at once sent to Paris for other songs of hers, of which more presently, and also gave me various details of the composer's private life, of which, it appeared, that wild song might serve as condensed statement. Only unfortunately life lasts longer than fourteen bars of music and is harder to work into a harmonious whole. Full of my subject I of course wrote about it to my friend H. B., and learned that once upon a time in early youth, possessed by that terror of love which Henri de Régnier tells us is a more frequent trait in young men than their

proceedings would lead one to suppose, he had fled before the spell of Augusta as wild animals flee from danger. He described to me a wonderful spring night ; a band of comrades returning in various *sapins* from an expedition to Versailles ; a full moon ; cherry-trees in ghostly blossom on either side of the road ; and, throned on the back-folded hood of the centre cab, *la Holmès*. From between her lips song and poetry flowed unceasingly—now an Ode of Horace, now an improvisation in the French she had tamed to her use as poets can ; and among the worshippers grouped at her feet who for ever rekindled her dying cigarette was H. B. It was on the following day that, without telling his love, he fled by the first train.

No wonder she took the art world by storm, this girl who, electing to live the life of a Bohemian, was at the same time a poetess, a superb musician, a classical scholar, a patriot of the orthodox Irish type, and an all-round revolutionary whom the sight of a red Garibaldi melted to tears. Yet notwithstanding a singularly bold independent spirit she seems to have been emphatically a man's woman, and, as Madame le Breton would say, it ' spoilt nothing ' that she was physically entrancing : a cameo-like profile very like Napoleon's, golden hair, dazzlingly fair skin, and beautiful grey eyes, though I think the head was too large. One gathered that the word ' prudence ' did not exist in her vocabulary, that she was generous and warm-hearted to excess; and whatever she did or did not accomplish the wing of genius had certainly brushed her cradle.

In an exquisite chapter of George Moore's ' Memoirs of my Dead Life ' called ' Ninon's Table d'Hôte,' she passes across the stage ; and what a stage ! the amazing garden of an old light-of-love, full of cats and ducks, macaws and cockatoos. The menagerie even included a badger and her brood ; also a bear, before whom

George Moore fled as H. B. was perhaps flying at that very moment before Augusta.

'On going towards the house,' he writes, 'I heard a well-known voice. "This is Augusta Holmes," I said, "singing her opera. She sings all the different parts, soprano, contralto, tenor, and bass." At that time we were all talking about her, and I stood by the window listening.' . . . (Here an unfortunate incident connected with a cat occurred, which caused Augusta and her admirers to leave the piano and seek the fresh evening air. . . .) 'What a beautiful evening it was! And how well do I remember the poet comparing the darkening sky to a blue veil with the moon like a gold beetle upon it. One of the women had brought a guitar with her, and again Augusta's voice streamed up through the stillness, till, compelled by the beauty of the singing, we drew nearer; as the composer sang her songs attitudes grew more abandoned and hands fell pensively. . . .'

'We were all in love with her,' I once heard Saint-Saëns say—'literary men, *savants*, painters, musicians; any one of us would have been proud to make her his wife.' But for marriage, as for most other well-sanctioned proceedings, Augusta Holmes had no inclination. To lead a life of violent emotion is to some natures a necessary condition of productivity. One remembers that the great mathematician Sophie Kowalewski declared she could not work out the inspired guess that won her the Bordin prize unless 'le gros M.,' who was the man of the hour, was seated at the table mending her pens. I rather fancy Augusta's temperament must have been on similar lines, but, alas! the dominant love-venture of her life was unfortunate. Her purse had always been open to all, and when at length her once ample means were exhausted, I fear she found herself stranded in more ways than one. But to judge by George Moore's

memoirs this was the usual fate of artistically-disposed women of that epoch—which accounts, I suppose, for the strange views held by my father and his contemporaries about ' artists.'

Luckily her gift of melody-writing survived the *débâcle* and the market did not weary of her songs. In those I know, the poems of which are nearly always her own, voluptuousness is the prevailing note. There is one song, a sort of Hymn to Aphrodite, which, if suitably orchestrated and adequately rendered, might end by being forbidden by whatever Society sees to these things. It is as languorous, as enervating as the celebrated Barcarolle in ' Hoffmann's Tales,' which I remember Gustav Mahler, as a young man, declared was as immortal as the ' Tristan ' he had just been conducting.

But Augusta Holmes has other notes. Some of her songs have a dewy freshness that suggests a French Schubert—for instance, the well-known child's song, ' Noël,' and the exquisite little ballad with the refrain, ' M'aimes-tu . . . ne m'aimes-tu pas,' set to a simple horn-call which is the recaptured echo of something that happened long ago, that happens to-day, that will go on happening for ever.

There is one fierce song of hers, ' Chansons des Gars d'Irlande,' which would go round the world but for the fact that there is no demand for a Home Rule song in French. This hymn of vengeance, with a touch of cheapness in its enthusiasm and of hysterical cruelty in its fierceness, has nothing of the divine wrath of a great nation that forged the ' Marseillaise ' ; but the reckless energy of the closely-knitted rhythm, the sledge-hammer whacking-out of the melody by the right thumb, the really terrifying go of the tune, make it unique in song literature. Madame Conneau said that, listening to Augusta singing it, whole rooms-full of law-abiding citizens would see red. And when, trusting to the

knowledge of foreign tongues that obtains in England, I used to sing it at Primrose League meetings under the title of ' Orange Song,' the effect was electrifying.

I may further add, if it be not too egotistic, that when John Sargent was doing a ' black-and-white ' portrait of me, the request to ' sing something exciting ' was met first by Schubert's ' Gruppe aus Tartarus,' and then by this song of Holmes's. And Sargent was so startled by it that, as he afterwards declared, he had hardly been able to go on drawing !

Of Augusta Holmes's suites for orchestra, symphonic poems, and chamber music I am ignorant to this day, though, as I said elsewhere, Sir Henry Wood once produced a Symphonic Poem of hers called ' Irlande ' which he declares was very fine and admirably orchestrated. Of her opera I only heard a part ; but knowing what I do about the difficulties of opera composers, especially *plus* the handicap of sex, the astonishing fact about it was that it existed at all. Fifteen years elapsed between the acceptance of ' La Montagne Noire ' at the Paris Opera and its production—fifteen years of heart-sickening hope deferred—and it must have been some time in the 'nineties that, passing through France in a hurry, I contrived to hear three of the four acts.

I thought the libretto bad, though they said she would not allow this (no composer-librettist ever does) ; the machinery of the plot struck me as conventional and much of the music was student's work. But, child though she must have been when most of it was written, she invariably rose to the big situations, and given her strong dramatic instinct and the pages upon pages of warm, beautiful, melodious music in it, a second opera from her pen might have been a masterpiece.

But it was never to be written. Herein lay the pathos of her fate, that by the time she saw her work played it was too late to profit by the experience. Worn out by

the struggle for life and the nervous strain to which all pioneers are exposed—a strain of which followers of an ever so slightly-beaten track can form no conception—Augusta Holmes had laid down her arms. Such at least was my impression when, in the year 1899 or thereabouts, impelled by a great desire to see and thank one to whom all women owe a great debt, I wrote to ask permission to visit her.

She lived at the top of a very high house overlooking the country and was not by way of receiving just then, having barely recovered from a severe illness, but to a fellow-composer anxious to do her honour she would not deny her door. I was shown into an empty music-room of a type I know too well and consider one of the most depressing spectacles life can afford—the gala room of a *ci-devant*. The walls were smothered in tarnished trophies of all kinds, including laurel wreaths of gigantic size and incredible age tied up with faded ribbons from which dangled fly-blown visiting cards. There were photographs framed and be-scrawled with passionate protestations ; there were locks of hair flattened out behind glass and similarly dedicated ; there was a satin shoe, and, strangest of all, on a nail hung a flute adorned with dusty little woollen balls like Christmas-tree pen-wipers. Evidently, I said to myself, some enamoured flautist must have hung it there after playing one of her *obligati*, resolved that never again should it utter music—even as the Jacobites would drink to *The King over the Water* and fling their glasses over their shoulders. But this did not solve the mystery of the woollen pen-wipers.

The whole side of another wall was taken up by a startling and, I thought, rather repellent full-length life-size portrait, evidently the work of a demented admirer of Rembrandt, in which *la Holmès* was depicted darting across a pitch-dark room and transfixing with

one slender finger a brilliantly illumined note, the rest of the keyboard being in gloom. One felt instinctively that this work had given great satisfaction to the two people chiefly concerned, and I was recovering from the shock of it when the folding doors opened and the original entered the room.

She was attired with delightful absence of vanity in a red flannel dressing-gown of the type worn by my sisters and myself in our schoolroom days ; and though the hair and complexion were evidently carrying on a tradition, there was not much trace of the physical charm of her youth. But the manner was exceedingly winning—frank, cordial, and free from either affectation or the bitterness of one whose sun has set. And there was a touch of gallantry, too, about the whole personality that in after years I recognised as the legacy of yet another tradition—that of Villiers de Lisle Adam and Barbey d'Aurevilly.

In my letter I had based my claim to intrude on the fact that I was a fellow-struggler in the thicket of opera, and, to be frank, I fancied that some rumours of a recent event at Weimar—the production of my first opera, 'Fantasio'—must surely have reached her ears. I now realised with a mixed feeling of mortification and amusement that she had not the faintest idea who I was or what I had achieved ; enough for her that I was a music-loving stranger who admired and wished to know her.

One impression remains vividly. It had always distressed me to think of the terrible price she had paid for one or two of her passional ventures ; but when by chance the talk drifted for a moment into intimate regions, the serene detached key in which she pitched a casual reference to past storms was wonderfully reassuring. No doubt Telemachus, visiting the court of Menelaus, was equally relieved when, in the course of a pleasant chat with her priggish young friend, Helen commented in

exactly the same dispassionate manner on the events that led to the Trojan War, casting the blame on Aphrodite, who, she remarked, had misled her into abandoning her country, her child, and a dear husband who was neither stupid nor ugly.[1] So deeply imbued with the classical spirit was Augusta, that I am sure no other view of her own case would have occurred to her ; and indeed it is the only plausible way of accounting for certain phenomena : ' C'est Vénus toute entière à sa proie attachée.' . . .

A year or two later I again saw Augusta Holmes. It had long been a cherished project of mine to get up a Holmes concert in London—anything to bring a ray of sunshine into the rather grey autumn of her life. ' Der Wald,' my second opera, which had been produced in Berlin, was about to be performed in London, and I ignorantly fancied that this event might give me some leverage. So I wrote to say I would come and discuss the matter with her, bringing with me one whom she certainly would not remember, but who had worshipped her in his youth and would like to see her again.

That meeting is one of the supremely comic recollections of my life. In 1902 H. B. was still a very good-looking man, and the sight of him had the effect on Augusta of the classical bugle-call on the demobilised warhorse. Now for the first time I was able to reconstruct in flashes the beauty and fascination that had conquered Paris some decades ago ; and well for me that at least this pastime was open to me, for to push the real object of my visit, even to mention it, proved an impossibility. The drive from Versailles having been alluded to, similar recollections followed fast and faster ; her eyes full of the light of the past, my hostess had not a glance to spare for possible triumphs in the future.

[1] *Odyssey*, Book IV.

Unable to place a word, chagrined, provoked, yet conscious that nothing could be more perfectly in character and therefore on the whole well pleased, I at last got up and left the friends to their reminiscences, privately determining to return to the charge later on unaccompanied by any member of the male sex.

Then came 'Der Wald' in London. A fortnight later I was on the deck of a liner bound for New York, and as Ireland faded away in mist I took up my evening paper, snatched from one of those bundles that are invariably hurled on board as a vessel leaves the quay, and which the passengers are unable to resist though they have been studying the same papers all the way down to the port.

But I had not ; and it was with a shock that I read the head-line :

'Death of Augusta Holmes.'

. . . . . .

Before trying to answer the inevitable question, 'Did she write anything that will live?' I should like to offer the following Short Reflection on the Subject of Immortality.

Consider how many anonymous poems have taken root in our anthologies, what a vast number of pictures by 'that great artist Ignoto,' who someone said was his favourite painter, have survived. On the other hand, of how many writers who dominated their generation are the very names forgotten !

There is no more curious reading than Schumann's 'Music and Musicians,' full of enthusiastic tributes to composers no one has ever heard of ; and to add to our confusion, though the dawning of Brahms is heralded the references to Wagner are slight . . . and slighting. But perhaps the best illustration of the freakishness of fame is Guibert, who was taken by his generation and

by Voltaire himself for Voltaire's equal, and to-day is only remembered, if at all, because Julie de Lespinasse died of love for him! Or think of Bach, merely one among many in his day, who was considered 'old-fashioned' towards the end of his life by musical geniuses who now are with last winter's snow! . . . But it is useless to multiply proofs of the contention that notoriety during an artist's lifetime seems to determine nothing; contemporaries may be right and they may be wrong.

I go back to my starting-point, the works of Ignoto, and thereon base my belief that a perfect thing, however isolated, however small, is sure to live, because one fastidious and careful hand will pass it on to another till it is safe for all time. What matters is not the bulk of an artist's output, not the size of a work of art, but its quality. If one note in the divine harmony has been sounded to perfection, the faithful servant who struck it will enter into the joy of his Lord.

I believe that some of Augusta Holmes's compositions will survive on these lines; jewels wrought by one who evidently was not among the giants but for all that knew how to cut a gem. Even now, at that worst hour for an artist, the cold, dangerous hour that follows sunset, though many readers of these pages may not even have heard her name I expect her immortality has begun, that here and there she is being sung. And it pleases me to think that at this very moment, while I am invoking her memory, the earthly echoes of some of her music may be 'going by her like thin flames.'

July 1921.

CATCHWORDS AND THE BELOVED IGNORANTSIA

I

THERE are certain foolish conclusions habitually jumped to by the half-educated with which you endeavour to have patience, remembering that not so very long ago you yourself might have been seen taking equally foolish leaps. For instance, only comparatively late in life did it occur to me that if you are perpetually knocking a skinned knuckle against the furniture, it is not that a malign fate is pursuing you ; these contacts happen in the natural course of things, only you don't notice it because the skin of your knuckles happens to be whole. In the same way about ten years ago I realised for the first time that if the seat of a cane chair goes in the centre, it is not because your maid, deaf to entreaties and commands, plants her foot in the middle of the wicker-work when something has to be reached down ; it is simply that the sitter's weight is more grievously felt in the centre of the seat than elsewhere, and at this spot the chair's spirit is bound to give in first. (On the same day a cherished illusion that the gut of your racquet goes in the centre because you hit the ball so well and truly departed for ever.)

Yes ; by degrees we come to understand a little about life, and aided by the recollection of our past limitations, missings of the point, hasty cock-sure deductions, and half-baked judgments, we can account for the survival

of most anomalies. But one thing always surprises me, as a certain passage in a former chapter hints: how comes it that those whose business it is to have some acquaintance with the history of art are able to fling about the opprobrious word 'old-fashioned' in such a lighthearted way?

In the industrial world it has the sympathetic rôle assigned to it of ultra-violet ray that stimulates the flagging circulation of the great god Commerce. When a milliner assures us that our hat is old-fashioned, even people who are children in these matters understand her attitude. The new style of hat may be, as far as one ventures to judge, hideous, the old style rather beautiful, but this is obviously a side issue. Business must go on, and the milliner—that past-mistress of human nature—knows that nothing gives a customer more courage to jettison the innocent creation of last year than the word 'old-fashioned.'

All this is comprehensible. But what have these swayings to and fro of taste, this cult of change for its own sake, to do with the world of art, where the only important thing seems to be whether a given work is alive or dead? Nothing else counts in the long run, and as Clemence Dane says finely somewhere, the blood-link between the greatest gods and the littlest gods is that they are life-givers, life-makers. Yet this point is seldom if ever insisted on by the type of critical mariner who, dreading the open sea, prefers poking about land-locked harbours where nothing more dangerous is encountered than floating catchwords and shibboleths.

I should like to transfix with a pin every jargon word used in art discussion. Take the verb to 'date,' for instance. Giotto dates; anyone can see he is primitive; is he any the less immortal for that? On the other hand think of those writhing, complicated nudes of which the Bargello is full, by Michael Angelo's contemporaries.

These 'date' also ; the sculptors who wrought them went several steps farther than their master, and probably looked down on him as 'old-fashioned,' even as Bach's contemporaries called him 'old Pigtail.' Does that prevent these statues from being execrable ? have the gibes of Bach's detractors saved their compositions from oblivion ? 'Date' ? why the word lands us in absurdities of all kinds. What of the immortal 'Barbiere' written by a man who was of Wagner's epoch, yet not one bar of whose music betrays the fact ! And Sullivan, who I allow is only at his immortal best when tied to Gilbert, is in the same case. All that Rossini, Sullivan, and many others unknown to us in England did, was to write music so alive, so individual, that it would stand out in any age capable of distinguishing between real things and fakes—or, one might add, in any country possessed of a standard. For though I cannot say how the experts of his period sized up Rossini, there is not the slightest doubt that our pundits under-estimated Sullivan. The first edition of Grove's Dictionary of Music is there to witness against them for all time.

Or let us take another word, issue, like the verb 'to date,' of highbrowism and journalist culture ; that blessed word 'idiom.' We all know what those who use it mean; as a rule something quite respectable and admissible. But it always makes me think of that couplet from 'Wallenstein' I referred to in a former chapter and which shall be given here in the original :

> 'Wie er sich räuspert und wie er spuckt
> Habt ihr euch glücklich abgeguckt !'

When Schiller points out how little people love to dwell on and imitate the way some big person 'clears his throat and spits'—in other words, give their whole attention to unessential details—he was describing in drastic fashion the birth of an idiom. And when the

accidents of someone's artistic make-up are magnified, developed into a system, heralded as a revelation, and accepted as a test, lots of people begin to breathe freely. A new shibboleth has come into being, a formula that is concrete yet lends itself to cabalistic treatment. In my own art some people's preoccupation with what a simple-minded friend of mine calls 'wrong notes' always reminds me of the preoccupation of schoolboys with immoralities; and perhaps this tendency is merely a phase in the art-life of a country which, as regards critical acumen in music, is still at the adolescent stage.

Now my point is that a great creator may, or may not, accidentally invent what I cannot help calling some new trick of the trade; a new way of handling marble; a new style of brushwork; an unusual rhythm; a new conception of harmony ('wrong notes'); something, in short, that can at once be pounced upon by experts and labelled 'So-and-so's idiom.' But I maintain that this is not essential to genius. A unique figure like Wagner—and I am certain the same must be true of Napoleon—undoubtedly crashed into new country in every department of his activities. Nowadays his harmonies sound 'old-fashioned' to certain ears, but let us not forget that the first orchestra that ran through the Prelude to 'Tristan and Isolde' put down their instruments and dissolved in laughter. And we of the older generation remember only too well the dishing-up of that 'idiom' by every third-rate scribbler in Germany. To-day we know that it is Wagner's colossal handling of the passions in terms of music—his *dramatic art* (true mirror of what went on in his own mind)—and not an 'idiom' which is a small part of his outfit, that makes of him a granite cliff against which, though doubtless there will be ups and downs in his vogue, the waves of fashion will beat in vain.

But take Mozart. This successor of Haydn brought,

in a certain sense, nothing new into music, whether rhythmically or enharmonically ; in the latter respect Bach had already trodden revolutionary paths it was not in Mozart's nature even to follow up. In fact, in many ways he was ostentatiously conventional, but . . . a million times more *musical* than ordinary people. And genius means just that—a phenomenal plentitude of all the qualities a creator needs ; insight, emotional capacity, critical faculty, invention, and so on. Technically he gave us one or two very inevitable new effects in scoring, such as the soft trombones in ' The Magic Flute,' but no new ' idiom ' ; yet the manifestations of his art still leave us breathless with wonder. He never pushes his instruments to delightful extremes, as Strauss does, never makes them perform tricks ; rather, with divine breeding, he handles them so that your own fancy gets to work. A clarinet is no longer a limited thing of wood and metal, but an untrammelled spirit—a native of another sphere circling near enough for us to catch his song. And when a creator is able by his wizardry to harness your imagination to his car, we have, I think, the highest art of all.

Or look at Schubert, who, at the age of 31, when death pushed him off the scene, was hoping to do ' something better ' than the marvels he had already accomplished. Now where is his ' idiom ' ? Of course we can recognise any great writer, or painter, or composer at his best, but to talk of a Schubert idiom in the present meaning of the term would be sheer nonsense ; or, for the matter of that, of a Brahms idiom. I can imagine the scorn and fury of the latter if invited to allow he had such a thing about him. Once a well-meaning, but young and foolish person told him he had been described as the ' Sexten-König ' (the King of Sixths), whereupon he glared at the speaker, whirled violently round, and stumped away in a manner that only Brahms could

achieve. And that poor, would-be flatterer wished the earth would open and swallow her up. This I can vouch for as I was that person ; and though it happened over forty years ago, the thought of the incident still makes me hot.

And what of Bizet ? ' Carmen ' has been and is the favourite opera of rather important judges, beginning with Nietzsche, but there is no new idiom about it. It is merely an explosion, a controlled and chiselled explosion (if one may talk thus wildly) of genius. Or again, to step back some 250 years, I once spent, thanks to Philip Spitta, hours upon hours listening to the compositions of Bach's contemporaries—the very people who called him ' old Pigtail '—and upon my word, to a mere musician (for experts see things the normal eye cannot detect), there is even less variance between their respective methods than between those of Haydn and Mozart. The difference lies in the calibre,—as between the Alps and Snowdon ; and in the quality—as between the Gospels and those apocryphal, second-century writings eventually rejected by the Fathers of the Church. To us, whose eyes are no longer blinded by contemporary dazzlement, it seems incredible that these pseudo-Evangels were ever candidates for admission into the canon, yet they had their vogue in their day. So, too, had the mechanical contrapuntalists of the seventeenth century, and the turgid nineteenth-century imitators of the Wagner ' idiom,' these last being, of course, the spiritual heirs of those who had once maintained that Wagner was no musician, and who were presently to deny melody (!) to Bizet. If you mistake gold for dross, you make up for it by insisting that dross is gold. Which is as it should be, and gives everyone a chance.

In order to explain what considerations have induced me to discuss this question of catchwords, and of the

attitude of the superior and enlightened person in general towards music, I must come a step nearer to autobiography than is pleasant to me in this connection.

I seldom read the newspapers at all, because I prefer reading books (there is not time for both), and such reviews as I do read rarely concern music. But being a Jack of Two Trades, and having recently published a book of travel, I indulged in a guinea's worth of literary Press cuttings, particularly stipulating that only on this field were the scissors to operate. The conclusion I have come to is, that, supposing these specimens to be typical, the level of literary criticism in this country is very high.

In writing anything one has definite aims in view ; one hopes to convey such and such an impression, to secure one's readers' company along such and such a road. Well ! not in one single case can I complain of misconception. If the expression be permitted, all these reviewers knew what one was driving at and met one half-way. Apart from that I was struck by the thoughtfulness, the suggestiveness of their remarks ; and, best of all, I found perpetual mention of a quality that is apparently of no importance whatever to those who discuss music but which these literary reviewers seem to consider rather essential ; call it go, gaiety, vigour, temperament, violence, what you will ; the quality Clemence Dane calls life-giving—which Puccini's music has, and which is one of the secrets of his immense popularity. It is a quality the reverse of that drifting along vaguely, sadly, invertebrately, which I fancy is considered poetical, atmospheric nowadays. And by the same token I daresay that energy, will, and plastic design in music are considered vulgar, or at best ' old-fashioned ' ; just as at the beginning of the nineteenth century it was thought ' unladylike ' in a woman not to swoon and have the vapours.

Well, I shall not attempt to probe this matter to the

core in order to find out how it comes that this quality of vitality, which one would imagine is an element necessary to creation of any kind, is never mentioned in musical controversy, and why, on the contrary, it is held in such high honour on the field of literature. But here is my own explanation in a nutshell.

As I ventured to point out in a previous chapter[1] the law that production is the real test of a country's vitality holds good on all fields; and whereas the stream of good literature has never run dry in England, for over 200 years we were musically dead. Now I seem to remember Coleridge saying somewhere that when the poets fall silent people lose the knack of reading and understanding poetry; 'It is Chinese to them' is a phrase that has stuck in my mind. Well; when our music-makers fell silent, among other muscles in the musical body that atrophised from lack of use was the critical faculty. Hence, when life began to stir again, poor little upspringing babies found themselves in a crêche run by spinsters and bachelors of three generations back—people who had forgotten the good old traditions of the nursery, and perhaps discouraged vitality because it got on their nerves; (even as noisy, very alive children are appreciated by the present writer in theory only).[2]

I mention this matter of the literary reviews I have lately been conning merely in passing, and will make only one further reference to extraneous, that is to say non-musical, pronouncements on kindred subjects. Opening the *Morning Post* one day my eye lit—I cannot think why, for painting is altogether off my beat—on the following sentence: 'The good *old-fashioned* art of Steer and Sickert is newer by far than the *dernier cri* from Paris.' Then came a reference to 'latter-day tendencies, some of which begin in a shriek and end in a flabby silence devoid of gestation.' Finally the art of these

[1] *See* p. 78. [2] *See* a rider to these views on criticism, p. 45.

'old-fashioned' English painters is declared to be compact of 'sight, insight and sincerity'; to be 'fuller of surprises than the Post-Cézannes and belated Gauguins' with which it rubbed shoulders on the wall of whatever exhibition was in question.

'Sight, insight, sincerity'!! the ironical inverted commas enclosing the word 'old-fashioned,' the implied contempt of up-to-dateness for its own sake . . . would that one could light on winged words like these in the realm of music discussion! And once more my mind swung back to the trail it had been following as regards literature, and I remembered that good painting, like good literature, has never been unrepresented in this country. And so back again, with a sigh, to my private theory about the 200 years' silence in music, and the weak-nerved guardians whose spirit will probably rule the nursery for many years yet.

II

Then came one of those happenings destined to rank as landmarks on the little map of one's life. In the course of three short weeks I heard two operas, 'Fidelio' and 'Il Trovatore'; heard them again after many years, with a new freshness of spirit shot through by vibrant echoes of old enthusiasm that made of each of those evenings an unforgettable experience. After that I felt I must proclaim the faith that is in me before I die,—and, what is more, do it at once. For to write about music is like writing to the newspapers about the telephone; if you don't beat down nausea and do it instantly it will never be done at all.

Let me begin by registering my impressions of 'Fidelio.' After a fifteen years' fast, these were so overwhelming that it was difficult not to do the ill-bred

and ridiculous thing of crying visibly—even audibly—almost from start to finish. And the performance . . . ! Bruno Walter was conducting, the orchestra playing as they sometimes do when he conducts. I remember Levi, Mahler, and other great 'Fidelio' conductors, but no one can ever have understood the work more deeply and conducted it more divinely than Walter. The cast consisted of members of his own company from Potsdam—all of them imbued to the very marrow of their bones with that sacredly beautiful music; the Leonora no longer quite young, but her voice still round, resonant, and thrilling, her acting touching, indeed heart-rending, but always harmonious. So with the rest. Florestan dignified, a great gentleman, not the pathological case some tenors make of him; Marcellina absolute perfection. Here at last, as was only natural, we had a real ensemble; only one discrepant figure—a solitary Englishman, unbroken to the stage, helpless, ill at ease, his fine voice of no use to him, as will always be the case when singers devoid of either vocation or training step on to the boards. But I will not dwell upon that one blemish. What caught at my heart was the inward angle of the performers to the music, a blend of passion and respect for art which is a thing unknown in this country—a state of mind from which, with our under-rehearsed orchestras, our enforced preoccupation with the box-office, and our hopeless lack of standard, we are drifting farther and farther every year.

After the opera was over, longing to clasp hands with a blood-brother I fought my way across many obstacles to Professor Donald Tovey whom I had caught sight of in the stalls, and begged him to let me come soon for an orgy of 'Fidelio' talk. Next day, as is my custom, I refrained from perusing anyone's remarks about the performance, but gradually it came round to me that various of those sheep whose vocation it is to echo what

they believe to be the sentiments of the 'best people' were bleating about London that 'Fidelio' is 'a poor opera'! And finally, to my unspeakable amazement, I learnt from the Professor that some of our wiseacres really are under the impression that it is considered a failure in Germany!

What?! . . . 'Fidelio,' which is to Germany what the 'Messiah' is to England—which is as integral a part of any German opera season as 'Figaro' or 'Walküre' (Walter says he gives it about 15 times in the year)—'Fidelio' a failure? It was hard to believe one had heard aright, and I suddenly became obsessed with terror lest the Syndicate, discouraged, should not give the work again next season. Then Professor Tovey reminded me that in its earliest shape, as 'Leonora,' it really had been a failure, and one asked oneself whether perhaps someone in authority had mixed up the respective fates of the two versions. Or had the sheep unfortunately put aside their shepherd's remarks half-way down the column and started bleating too soon?

The facts of the case are, that after that first failure of 'Leonora,' which various hasty tinkerings of the libretto did nothing to alter, the work was put aside. A few years later one Treitshke drastically overhauled the libretto; Beethoven then rearranged its musical vesture, and in 1814, thanks to the unique position he had then attained, the opera was revived as 'Fidelio,' and made the deep impression it has done ever since, though as Professor Tovey put it 'imagination boggles' at the horrors of that performance. For instance the Overture was said to be too difficult and that of the 'Ruins of Athens' substituted (!). At that time, too, many people's ideas about love were still of an eighteenth-century complexion, and these found the sub-title of the opera, 'L'Amour Conjugale,' and indeed the whole

subject, woefully lacking in salt. In spite of which it was quite evident that 'Fidelio' had come to stay.

From that day to this the opera has never lost its hold on the public—and never will lose it, though Professor Tovey tells me there has always been a school of dramatic critics that resents the success of 'Fidelio,' because, as early Wagnerites (unsupported, one is glad to think, by the Master himself) were wont to declare, this is 'symphonic' not 'stage' music. Which shows how far bad riders can be pulled out of the straight by their absurd hobby horses, for anything more dramatic than Beethoven's music it is difficult to conceive. Fortunately the German public is too deeply musical to heed these academic pronouncements; they flock to hear 'Fidelio' just as our people flock to Gilbert and Sullivan regardless of periodical highbrow attempts to 'smash' those heavenly twins.

I remember, too, in my Leipzig days, that Wagnerian out-and-outers, broken in by Wagner to a wholesale glorification of sensual love (including the loves of Siegmund and Sieglinde), adopted with enthusiasm the line taken by those earliest eighteenth-century minded 'Fidelio' detractors, and maintained that an emotion such as Leonora's for this husband of hers, who had been spirited away two long years ago, was 'middle-class.' This is as near as we can get to that glorious word *spiessbürgerlich*, with its rich redolence of sausages, sauerkraut, and beer.

What aberration is this? . . . how fatally predoomed to fray away to nothing as strand in the woof of serious criticism! . . . how obviously the extravagance of a passing hour! Of course such sneers had no chance against a divine work like 'Fidelio'; equally, of course, such aberrations crop up again and again, for all epochs are 'decadent' if you select your company with care. Early in this century I remember hearing in

Paris an amusing account of a *Conférence* that had just taken place among the young bloods of the literary left. The subject given was 'Love' and each debater was invited, before reading his paper, to indicate what department of this ample theme he had selected for treatment. One announced that he had chosen 'L'amour sadique'; a second proposed to deal with homo-sexuality. '*Tiens!*' said a third, '*moi j'ai pris l'amour lesbien.*' The President then turned to the new member, a very young man who was standing modestly in the background; '*Et vous, Monsieur?*' he asked. '*Moi, Monsieur,*' replied the neophyte, shyly, deprecatingly—'*Moi j'avais simplement préparé l'inceste.*'

Now I do not go so far as to class the Wagnerites of the 'eighties with these comic *conférenciers* of 1904, but enough of that spirit is in the air to make it worth while to say just this.

We all know, either by experience or hearsay, something about the sort of love which Racine summed up in an immortal Alexandrine already quoted in these pages.[1] But what of the other sort—the love born of oneness of soul as well as body, on which, if we are fortunate enough to possess it, our life pivots? All have not the luck to have known that most perfect oneness of all, but even so there is such a thing as love strong as death, though free from passion in the narrower sense of the word. And there are other qualities without an infusion of which in our existence life would be no better than a weary pilgrimage through a trackless pigsty. The sort of passion that is in 'Fidelio' wells up from the deepest places of the human heart—includes all these; and looking round during that Covent Garden performance I saw upon people's faces what I wanted to see there.

How could it be otherwise? Think of the war; is

[1] 'C'est Vénus toute entière à sa proie attachée.'

there an adult in this country who does not know all these things ?—love poignant as Leonora's, whether for husband, lover, sister, brother, or child ; dread as to the fate of one thus loved ; the slow torture of captivity (I never quite realised the pathos of the Prisoners' Chorus till I had been behind bars, though relatively kindly bars, myself) ; the agony of not being able to communicate freely with those you love ; hope deferred ; the almost unbearable anguish of joy when the strain is relaxed and you begin to believe in happiness once more. . . . Listening to 'Fidelio,' many who have known these things must have felt, though perhaps only subconsciously, something to which their soul responded. Beethoven's genius is too limpid, too irresistible in this particular manifestation, not to have reached them somehow. But alas ! the great bulk of our opera-goers is musically untrained and lacks self confidence. Enough that someone tells them that this is a 'poor' opera, or 'hopelessly old-fashioned,' or what not, and behold them turning their backs on their true instinct, cheated of a balm that might have soothed some secret, undying pain. Beethoven gave them bread, and some middleman has turned it into a stone ! It cuts one to the heart to think of it. . . .

To come back to a cool, dispassionate estimate of 'Fidelio' as a work of art. I hear that after those performances at Covent Garden remarks were passed as to how much better Mozart would have handled the theme. To me this does not seem a very interesting speculation ; anyhow we are certain that for all his genius he could not have made of it what Beethoven has. In the libretto, according even to Professor Tovey, there are many vulnerable spots, of which, once they are pointed out to me, I have to allow the existence. For instance we are never told in so many words what Leonora's quest really is, nor that she is a woman in

disguise (unnecessary though this information too often is !) and I quite recognise missed opportunities here and there, especially in the 1st Act. The Professor declares it is very significant that apparently I have never realised how badly the story is told. It proves (he says) firstly, the power of the music ' to a person who listens to music as such ' ; secondly, ' the immense moral value of the story conceived as Beethoven conceived it ' ; thirdly, that great opera music gets home on its own legs, so to speak ;—and even, I might add, on the wrong leg, as an anecdote he had from Dr. Vaughan Williams (which I shall presently relate) gloriously proves.

I think these three points he makes justify my saying in answer to Sir Henry Hadow or anyone else who declares the libretto is bad : ' I venture to disagree.' It seems to me that when a story is so deeply moving and lends itself to such dramatic situations, ineptitudes here and there do not matter. Not to the public at least, for—once more to quote the Professor—' the colossal effrontery of this *symphonic* music getting over, in spite of bungled places in the libretto, is a thing no Critical Bureau can forgive.' With these implacable ones it is useless to argue, but let me ask people of ordinary sensibility if there is anything in the world of opera to compare with that terrible grave-digging scene in the prison, of which the foiling of Pizarro is the culmination ? As a young relative of mine remarked : ' To resist the thrill of that, you must have no heart in your body.' She had recently been swept off her feet by hearing the ' Ring ' for the first time, but when I asked her if anything in Wagner had given her an emotion as deep and poignant as this, the answer was ' *Good Lord, no !* '

I quote these unstudied utterances culled from the lips of one who is, musically speaking, a babe and a suckling, because I believe that nine out of ten people would feel like this if left to themselves. Nine out of

ten *simple-minded* people, that is, of average intelligence. And long before I had come across that already quoted remark of Dr. Johnson's, to the effect that on the verdict of these (*not* of the highbrows) our immortality really depends, the opinion of that class of person always interested me far more than so-called cultivated opinion.

As for the mixture of dialogue and music, which, according to the Wagnerites is, or used to be, considered a crime—as well complain of any other convention in art ; the incongruity, for instance, of dumping down a bejewelled Venetian nobleman, his wife, his children, and a brace of Cardinals, in the midst of the Holy Family or among the anguished spectators of the Crucifixion. Yet this custom of the Renaissance painters should surely not affect a cultivated mind one way or the other. Wagner, a great genius, bent on driving home a new conception of music-drama and giving his countrymen what he called a new, absolutely German art, naturally railed against the Italian conventions he hoped to supersede, considering them ripe for the rubbish heap. Thus innovators ever feel. But we, the unbiassed spectators of results, have surely had time and opportunity to learn that in the house of Art there is room for everyone ; that there are no superior or inferior systems, only more or less complete manifestations of the Holy Ghost.

'Old-fashioned!' that fatal word turned up early in this article ; and it distresses me that in giving vent to the passion of surprise and (I confess it) anger that overwhelmed me when I recently saw it put to what I consider a perverted use, I am challenging a man whose judgment I respect and often agree with, whose handling of the English language is a delight to me, and against whom I have, as a rule, only one grievance—namely, that his subject matter being generally music, I read him but

seldom. Ah ! how wise is this reluctance to study other people's utterances about my own art, since one solitary departure from abstention begets this full-dress outbreak —which moreover will probably do no good !

This time yet another opera was in question that I had not heard for ages, and probably never so finely rendered as last year in London, namely ' Il Trovatore.' The genius of it simply staggered me. This time I carefully read up the extremely complicated story— a thing I had never done before, probably feeling instinctively that in so superb a series of stage pictures the plot matters no more than in a revue. And here let me interpolate the anecdote I have already referred to about Dr. Vaughan Williams and a pupil he took to hear ' Götterdämmerung ' for the first time. The youth showed highest appreciation of the music, and of the stage as stage, but afterwards asked : ' Who was the chap who came through the fire and talked to Brunhilde at the end of the first act ? ' I rather believe this is the mental angle of most opera goers, and probably a sound one. Anyhow in ' Il Trovatore ' you could almost dispense with any knowledge whatsoever of the story, so superbly are the ethic contents of each incident conveyed by the situation and the music. The poverty of the instrumental exploitation seems to me a matter of indifference, so mighty is the emotional force of every scene ; and why cavil at not having everything when you are given so much ? Meanwhile what gorgeous intoxicating melody, what rhythmic pointfulness, what driving power . . . in a word, what first, fine, careless rapture ! And, thank Heaven, all this got home at Covent Garden to an audience as obviously enthralled as they had been by ' Fidelio,' only with another brand of enthrallment.

This time, after what had come round to me (I like that expression) respecting the other opera, I thought

I would see what Mr. Ernest Newman had to say about the Verdi work. In my foolishness I had imagined it would be something like this : ' See what a big place the world of art is ! learn that though each age has, in the language of pedants, its idiom ' (of course that word would have to turn up somewhere) ' the only thing that matters is genius. Confess to have been as thrilled, *though differently*, by this work that superficial Wagner-maniacs fancied they had slain with ridicule forty years ago, as by the " Ring " you were listening to only last month, or by " Rosenkavalier " ! ' Thus I thought a man with a big soul for music, a man of culture in the best sense of the word, would surely speak after witnessing a really fine performance of a work that inadequate renderings had perhaps led some of his juniors to under-estimate.

Alas ! what did I find in that column ? Here are a few extracts, the italics being mine. ' The disrespectful hilarity that the *old work* produced at times ' was *partly* the fault, no doubt, of the two male exponents. ' No one thought of laughing when the two women were singing, though some of Leonora's music is as *comically old-fashioned* as anything the men have to tackle.' Then comes a comment on ' this antiquated Italian dramatic style,' and lower down, speaking of touches of over emphasis on the part of the female exponents, the writer attributes it to their knowing that ' the best had to be made of a case *in itself none too good*.' (This of two of the most grateful roles in operatic literature !) True, Mr. Newman allows there can be no question of the power of the opera, only this concession is somewhat discounted by his calling the Verdi of that early epoch ' a sprawling bouncing cub, to whom clumsiness and silliness must be forgiven as being part of his size.' And in conclusion the writer affirms that ' the general idiom of that day has *passed out of our blood*,' and that nothing

but intensity and conviction like that of the two singers in question ' make it *real for the moment.*'

Now, may I ask once more, what of the ' idiom ' of Giotto—already used as illustrating the point I am trying to make—of Massaccio, of Holbein ? Since these we have had Velasquez, Goya, Ingres, and in our own day the very modern ' idiom ' of Manet, Sargent, and John. What should we think of an art critic who spoke in terms of what I cannot but call offensive patronage of Old Masters because the painters of to-day paint in another style ; or who went out of his way to explain that nothing short of framing them in a perfect light can make the productions of these old fellows tolerable to our enlightened vision ? True, the other day, I heard of a certain young painting-master, attached to a boys' school, who led a bunch of pupils round the National Gallery, pausing now and then before an Old Master long enough to murmur : ' Pitiful, pitiful ! ' and pass on. The boys, of course, were deeply impressed, though we, who know that type of ' connoisseur,' do not take them seriously. But, to wing our way into higher regions, let us ask ourselves how we should judge a writer to *The Times Literary Supplement* whose appreciation of St. Paul's oratory (I am thinking of the bouncing cub passage) should shape thus : ' Of course his grammar is deplorable and his style so painfully turgid and involved that it inevitably provokes a smile ; in fact, it can only be taken seriously and made to sound possible if declaimed by a reader of genius. All the same he was a big man and we must make allowances for faults of taste that are an unfortunate result of vehemence and calibre.' (I do not think this is an unfair parallelisation of the cub passage ; certainly to be unfair is far from my intention.)

Now will it surprise Mr. Newman to hear that while I gaze with stupefaction at the development of genius that resulted in ' Aida ' and ' Othello ' (and in an opera

I have never heard, 'Falstaff'), many, many musicians, among them myself, rate 'Il Trovatore' still higher, and believe that the world will ultimately feel about the earlier Verdi as all of us feel to-day about 'Poems and Ballads' as contrasted with Swinburne's later work, or about 'Maud' and the very latest 'Idylls of the King'?

Here I can imagine Mr. Newman or any other interlocutor saying: 'Why get so excited about what is after all a mere difference of opinion?' Well; I think it is more than that. The great sculptor Hildebrand used to say—and he wrote what has become a classical pamphlet on the subject—that the training of public judgment in the matter of estimating works of art is of the greatest importance, not only to the public but to on-coming creators. Thus I feel about music, and I think some very good reasons can be given for deploring, as I do, this habit—born perhaps of the dread of being thought a back-number oneself—of clapping the label 'old-fashioned' on any modern work that is not written in the latest art jargon, or, as in the above cases, on operatic masterpieces that have withstood the test of time, merely because Wagner, or Debussy, or Strauss, in running their quarry to earth, have exhibited other notions of venery than those of either Verdi or Beethoven. I seem, when listening to such talk, to be sitting in a Woking 'bus, overhearing remarks as to 'what is worn now' . . . and before my eyes floats a phrase in a certain letter: 'that musically provincial hole London.' . . . !

Let us first take the repercussion on the public. I have said why I found the belittling of 'Fidelio' particularly distressing. But it is sad to reflect, too, that many who recently were swept away by the stream of warm life that gushes forth in every bar of 'Il Trovatore'

should be given to understand next day that their emotion was a proof of defective critical acumen. We forgive little boys who trouble some wayside pool with a stick, just for the fun of the thing, but I do not like to see grown-ups doing it. There are many, many who, I really believe, would love the best if let alone ; not experts, but as I said before quite simple individuals who, they know not why, love music ; in a word, ' the common people ' (ah ! how fond I am of calling that phrase to remembrance) who heard Christ gladly. I resent these being induced to distrust and despise their own instincts by exponents of up-to-date-ism—a theory I consider uncivilised, modern in the worst sense, restless, feverish, superficial, a product of spiritual journalism and the cinema, a frame of mind both ignoble and unhistorical.

I specially deplore this habit in matters musical, because in that art it is so hard, for practical reasons, to readjust your system after a jolt. The piece you were apparently so wrong in liking may not be given again for months and years ; and even if the score is published, you may not be able to get on terms with it at home, and find out how right you were when, in spite of the little boy with the stick, you divined a god's image in the pool. Now that troublesome child matters less in painting. You can always go back to the gallery and see if the picture you admired is really such a daub as all that ; you may even summon up courage enough to go on admiring it all the same, in spite of everybody !

But of all the arts, literature is in the most favoured position. Suppose someone has persuaded you that to take life from a less grisly angle than the authoress of ' The Heart and the Hambone ' is to display ' the cheap optimism of a Dickens '—in fact to dub yourself a back-number ; that to be unable to thread your way through her ' nice derangement of epitaphs ' and penetrate her

exact meaning (which is my own unfortunate case) proves you to be either a spiritual Cheap-Jack or a victim of intellectual arthritis. Well, you can buy the book, study it at leisure, and revel in the luxury of finding out what you yourself think, in contradistinction to what some reviewer or some friend of yours thinks. Nowadays this is more than ever a fortunate dispensation for literary creators, given the success with which some poets get themselves boomed in the Press, and the consequent danger to a flustered public of being hustled and bullied into opinions they do not honestly hold. People are so very authoritative about it ; for instance in a recent debate on literature between Mr. Osbert Sitwell and Mr. Osborn, the latter said : ' There is new wine for us, but those who give it must have new bottles, *that is, a new technique.*' Now ' new bottles ' does not necessarily mean a new technique ; I can think of half a dozen other interpretations of the phrase. Also one ventures to doubt whether good new poetry is really as dependent on a new technique as all that.

Anyhow, in the midst of these theories and fermentations, suddenly a new singer comes along, magnificently deliberate, curiously quiet-voiced in spite of violence within. Not original with the originality of the cur-dog (the only brand some people are capable of detecting) ; for a well-bred animal betrays his lineage, and this new poet is obviously of the line of Hesiod, Virgil, Shakespeare, Milton, Herrick, and other great singers, yet differing from them all, as each of these differs from the other. And behold ! so infallibly does a public trained for hundreds of years respond to good literature, that long before ' The Land ' by V. Sackville West was awarded the Hawthornden prize, long before it had earned the high tribute of a slating from another poet, one became aware among friends and acquaintances of

a sort of underground heath-fire of love for it running from heart to heart. And you realised that most people who had read that poem—learned or simple—felt the same about it.

I hope I have made it clear that if one protests against the lack of perspective, amounting to total oblivion of past happenings in the history of art, exhibited by many who lay claim to being thoughtful spirits, it is chiefly because of the repercussion on the public. But is this modern, exceedingly undignified dread of being thought *vieux jeu* salutary for the art-maker? Does it conduce to the creation of things lovely and of good report if one is perpetually informed that to be striking and thrilling is everyone's first duty? On the field of music I know more than one composer as diatonically disposed by *nature* as I confess myself to be. None the less will these take, till they get sick of it (which mercifully happens sometimes), a simple folk melody, and trick it out with every harmonic contortion, every rhythmic spasm they can devise. It would be on a par with this proceeding (which I believe is called 'throwing in the mud') to bedizen some unfortunate infant with rouge, kohl, powder and a wig; not as a joke, but by way of turning it into a self-respecting, up-to-date baby.

Yet art-makers, if big enough, can look after themselves. Either you have, or have not, strength to resist the temptation to tamper with your integrity; and in any case, whatever your label, even if no one honours you with his enlightened attention, you can go on painting or writing all the same. Indeed you may lay the flattering unction to your soul that if the desire to create persists in spite of no pattings on the back—or even survives the pat of faint praise—the chances are you have something to say that is really worth saying.

Which means that somewhere there are people for whom you are spokesman, and that someday—no matter how long hence—these may recognise their own inarticulate thoughts and emotions in yours, and thank you for being their mouthpiece.

But these last two paragraphs are parenthetical. Let my final word be addressed to those who were in the foreground of my mind when I began this sermon—the *ignorantsia*, whom everyone who cares about culture would like to see capable of forming an independent judgment in art. To these my prayer as musician would be : cast away all memory of catchwords picked up like poisonous germs in the vicinity of the *intelligentsia*, and give any music you happen to be listening to free access to your soul. If, as knowing my England I am aware is constantly happening, you have been checked on the threshold of appreciation by the erroneous belief that to carp and criticise is a sign of intellectual distinction, may I say that if I am certain of anything in life it is that the exact reverse is the case. In letting Mephistopheles describe himself as ' the spirit that denies ' Goethe has held up that particular stamp of mind to everlasting execration ; and well he may, for to understand, to appreciate, if possible to love, is far rarer, far more difficult than to pick holes and reject. The threshold on which these superior persons, pitying your simplicity (as the hymn puts it), were kind enough to hold you up is, in my humble opinion, the threshold of the House of Life.

Above all things cling to your own instincts. If you dislike something you are hearing for the first time, remember you are perhaps right, but it is on the cards that you are merely being stupid. If, on the other hand, what you are listening to arrests you, amuses you, touches your heart, don't be intimidated by the thought

that it is perhaps not very high-class music, or old-fashioned, or anything else. Know, in spite of the experts, that in enjoying it you are on the side of the angels. And next day, when the man with the cold water can comes round, say to him, Pilate-like, ' What I have felt I have felt '—adding, as you push him out of the door : ' And there's an end on't.'

CONSTANCE LYTTON

'The Life and Letters of Lady Constance Lytton.' By Lady Betty Balfour. (Heinemann.)

WHEN the story of the militant movement—an expression of the spirit of England as potent as Magna Charta itself—gets itself written bit by bit, as happened with the Iliad, one chapter will bear the name of her whose letters and whose story (with certain inevitable reservations) have been given us by her sister—an editor supremely fitted, thanks to heredity and her own fastidious taste, for the task.

Constance Lytton may hardly be called a born letter-writer although telling expressions meet you at every turn; such as 'the big spilling splash of Nature's course'; or (in connection with one of the frequent collisions between the police and the militants): 'You say the thing seems futile; how *futile* to some onlookers is the flimsy green that shoots through an acorn!' But more self-revealing letters it would be hard to find. Quality after quality that matters gleams out of them; the passion for real things that made her tolerant even of war ('because it knocks one bang up against reality in the midst of so much that is sham and hypocritical'); the pity that caused her to sacrifice herself and her possessions to a perhaps excessive extent—a trait rarely pushed to extremes in our selfish lives; the sense of humour; the giving and taking of love; the perpetual striving after betterness. And, last but not least, her

sane perception of values as manifested in the Jane Warton incident.

This was the occasion, it may be remembered, on which, after thoroughly overhauling his prisoner, the prison doctor declared that Lady Constance Lytton's heart was far too weak to allow of forcible feeding. Whereupon she was released—of course without signing any sort of undertaking to abstain from militancy. About a fortnight later, strange to say, this very same heart, as tested in the body of one 'Jane Warton,' an obscure militant of the working class, was pronounced to be perfectly sound; so 'Jane Warton' was forcibly fed. And when Constance Lytton had more or less recovered from this hideous experience—curtailed probably by the inevitable leaking out of 'Jane Warton's' identity—in her very first public speech she called attention to the many obscure suffragettes tortured and broken by forcible feeding as she was, from whom an indifferent world would withhold even such grudging recognition of their heroism as it bestowed on the high-born lady in disguise.

Besides the letters, Lady Betty Balfour gives us two documents which in their way are masterpieces. One is a characterisation of her sister by Maurice Baring, so beautiful, so dead true to life, that I cannot resist quoting it here.

'The better the friend the more he hesitates to write. Her fastidious taste would have minded a wrong note in such a tribute as much as a musician minds an unintentional discord; but her kind heart would at once have forgiven it, and she would have concealed the wince. She could laugh at anything without being unkind. She had a celestial sense of humour and infinite powers of appreciation. Her tolerance and her toleration were wonderful; nobody could make a purse out of a sow's ear when it was necessary to do so more deftly and more tactfully. Almost you were persuaded that it was silk.

'She was quite unconscious of her gifts; she was cultivated and original and witty and talented, and she considered herself quite giftless. When her exquisite, sensitive, delicate nature reached the conviction that it was her duty to help to fight social wrongs and evils, and to help to fight them in a particular way, she was at once faced with what meant the sacrifice of her life. She made the sacrifice, and it was of a kind that, whatever we may think of the cause that inspired it or of the actions it entailed, there can be but one thing for us to do; and that is to bare the head in silence before her heroic courage and her sublime selflessness.

'Her delicate frame was broken in the struggle, but her radiant spirit was unimpaired and continued to give "kindly light" until she died. She is made one, we feel, with all happy, cheerful things; with fairy tales and cradle songs, the laughter of children and the toys of angels.

'Many people must have said when they read of her death what Poor Jo in "Bleak House" said about his benefactor, "She wos werry good to me, she wos." She would have laughed at anyone quoting Dickens about her (an author she detested), but she would have enjoyed the fun of it, and she would have understood, and have thought it quite right, on the part of her old friend.'

The other document is a paper by Dr. Mary Gordon, Inspector of Prisons treating of the genesis of militancy, and in it occur the following words: 'it was a spiritual movement, a thing of fire; not premeditated, not controllable, but *which happened* at the bidding of the unconscious, and, when its work was done, died down and out, leaving behind it a re-birth and a new situation.'

I think this is one of the most accurate and exquisite definitions I have ever come across.

Further, from these pages emerges a beautiful

picture of a parent, confronted in her old age by a new spiritual force fantastically alien to her own epoch and breeding ; facing this ordeal as only a loving mother and great lady could ; cut off by her daughter's illness from free intercourse with old friends ; sitting up late to rub the invalid to sleep ; going fireless that 'Con's room might be warm' ; doing all this without complaint and as a matter of course. When almost any reader closes the book, the concussion will surely set flowing a wave of sympathy and admiration in the direction of the heroine's mother.

And what of the heroes of this story ? To revert to that other epic, it would seem as if the meanness, perfidy, and general vileness of the gods who swayed the fortunes of the battle before Troy could hardly be matched outside Olympus. Studying the record of these Christian gentlemen it becomes clear that only one thing is left to the Immortals . . . to retire humbly from competition ! Man after man, who, when nothing but winning women's support at elections was in question, had glibly voiced our claims, would cast his promises to the winds when the hour struck for effective action ; displaying the same stupidity, treachery, obstinacy, conceit, and hypocrisy that had begotten, and was now feeding, militancy. 'Sex war indeed,' cries Constance Lytton, 'is not *this* sex war ? It is sex *peace* that we want !'

Some of these Galahads were revered figures on other fields ; such as 'A. J. B.,' the 'convinced woman's suffragist' who, implored by Constance Lytton and his own sister-in-law to speak in critical debates, does not 'really see what more he can be expected to do' than pair with Mr. Asquith. O glorious champion, who fourteen years later, as Earl of Balfour, is found imperilling his very person in the doubtful cause of Zionism, the Jews and an 'historical appeal' being, apparently, of more importance

to him than bare justice to his own country-women ! And Lord Esher, who for party reasons refuses his name—not, mark you, to the militants but to the Conservative Women's League—but promises his prayers which, he assures them, are far more valuable ! One cannot help feeling grateful to his lordship for enshrining in that inimitable phrase the unblushing hypocrisy of many of our champions ! And what of Bonar Law, the Aristides of English politics, daily ' more and more convinced ' of the righteousness of our claims, yet stubbornly refusing to stir a finger for them ?

As for the Liberal Cabinet, ten of whom were pledged to our cause, it is amusing to note that both the wise Mrs. Fawcett and the politically-bred Lady Selborne were more or less taken in by Mr. Asquith's assurances, given at a certain interview after that crowning act of treachery, the Adult Suffrage Bill, had been announced. Lady Selborne considered the implacable Pankhursts had lost their heads when, instead of accepting the Asquith-Judas embrace, they proclaimed the whole thing was a trap. But, as usual, they were right ; the Conciliation Bill was deftly ' torpedoed ' and the work of years brought to naught ! . . .

But enough ! Suddenly one sickens of the subject. Indeed if the pages of that unsavoury chapter in the lives of English Gentlemen have once more been turned by me, it is firstly because it is inevitable in a review of this kind, and secondly, because exactly the same thing is going on to-day. The machine of Trades Unionism, like that of politics, is in the hands of men ; and inasmuch as women are the mothers of the world, and therefore in many cases hall-marked for home-life, there will always be more men in affairs than women. Yet the latter are more than half the population, and I should be afraid to say what percentage is forced to be wage-earners. If, therefore, merely because they invented and still

control the machine, men continue to discount changes wrought in the body politic by natural causes, and persist in treating women as unwelcome rivals who must be kept out of medical schools, educational institutions, orchestras and everything else as long as possible, then, as Constance Lytton pointed out, with men, and not with women, rests the guilt and the shame of sex warfare.

But these matters are only mentioned in passing—as it were under one's breath ; a message to her who, like hundreds of others, gave all she had, at last her own life, in the hope of winning for her sex that fair play which seemed such a simple thing to ask for—which really was all but unattainable. And to-day, looking round us, we know, thank God, that their sacrifice has not been in vain.

'TOCHE'

When certain people die, there mingles with the pain of personal bereavement an element that is not necessarily part of your grief for other friends however dearly loved ; I mean a consciousness that with them some of your own strength is gone. And of all the friends I have had in this world, and lost, of none, with one exception, is this truer than of Toche Bulteau.

Were any one of us to make a chart of his progress through life, a map such as you find, or ought to find, at the beginning of every book of travel, there would be spots on it to which one could point saying : 'This was one of the most difficult places.' In a record of personal impressions such as this, I may perhaps be forgiven for saying that about the time I first met Toche, some twenty-six years ago, I was on the brink of such an epoch ; and I remember how, in the midst of it, she said to me : 'I know I can't be of any use to you now, but if ever you want me, here I am.' As a matter of fact she never ceased from first to last—more particularly in later years, and in increasing ratio—exercising a function in my life which the term 'being of use' but inadequately expresses. To rank among one's chief reasons for taking a walk at all, to become one of the main things you go out for to see, is far more than merely helping you over ugly places in the road; and this is what she eventually became to all her friends. For me, half the pleasure of writing is gone since I cannot send her the result, first thing, as was my invariable

custom ; in the same way the ludicrous incidents with which life is studded happen half in vain, since one no longer saves them up for her.

To us, the little group of her English friends, one of the great joys of our lives, when passing through Paris, was the instantaneous descent on Toche ; speaking for myself I know not which I enjoyed most—the intimate *tête-à-tête*, or dropping in on her *jour*. On these latter occasions I used to watch with admiration how after the vibrant welcome, unlike anyone else's, that made each of us feel how intensely glad she was to see one (which was the case), she would proceed, with the incomparable mastery of a brilliantly clever and absolutely human hostess, to weld you into the group. When bores arrived, her own resources were such that one felt she was glad, too, to see these ; as a brilliant *improvisatore* will take pleasure in handling a very dull theme, or as a cook of genius I once had loved to make superb soup out of a grouse's claw and half an onion. Besides which she appreciated faithfulness, and was glad to see anyone to whom, to quote her words to me, she could be of use. And as she transfigured every life she came into touch with, these were many.

I know a very rich and benevolent woman whose secretary once said to me, 'If you knew the hundreds of lame dogs she helps over stiles, not to speak of the aid given to people really worth starting in life, it would stagger you.' Thus with the spiritual help Toche lavished on her clients ; whether people of great intellectual distinction—such as M. Briand, Monseigneur Duchesne, Anna de Noailles, Henri de Régnier, etc. for whom her friendship and appreciation was perhaps the most stimulating part of their lives, or humble admirers who left her presence feeling they had been more brilliant and amusing than ever before, and only wished their habitual associates had been there to see it.

This, of course, was her speciality. Some of us—I myself for one—felt we never touched quite the same high-water mark of brilliancy as in those two rooms, one of which was dedicated to a sumptuous sit-down tea and general conversation, the other full of comfortable chairs, little tables, smoking apparatus, and everything conducive to the *tête-à-tête*.

I do not deny that she took a very favourable view of our mental capacity ; as a great mutual friend said to me—quoting a remark of O. Henry's—she made you ' bet on yourself.' A superb judge of pace, she knew when to use the spur, when to restrain, and when simply to let her mount rip ; and everyone handled by her had the sensation of being a noble animal ridden to victory by the supremest of jockeys.

At the same time she was a formidable hater, and in the two instances I am acquainted with of people having incurred her just displeasure she was absolutely implacable. But whereas implacability as a rule is, I think, the mark of a poorly endowed nature, in her case it was merely the inverse of the passionate devotion, thought, and indulgence she put at the disposal of her friends ; there was a fire, a gorgeous finality about Toche as hater that left you acquiescent and undistressed.

One of my great delights was to watch her grave, attentive face when some cherished and highly-gifted friend of hers was talking absolute nonsense, as among rhetorical Latins often happens to the highly-gifted. Letting off fireworks in this fashion is alien to the Anglo-Saxon temperament, and to take it thus, without a flicker of an eyelash, was probably easier for Toche than it would be for an English hostess. All the same it was a fine performance ; and more than once, knowing exactly what she was thinking, and noting her serene, reverent bearing under the flood of rubbish, I have thought of some naval chaplain on a sinking ship going

on quietly with the service while the water gradually rose to his knees.

Soon after her death I said in a little paragraph in a French newspaper that surely no one can ever have been more intensely worshipped. This is not surprising, inasmuch as her life is the story of one noble, unselfish devotion after another; all of which, and more, was written on that strong, brave, amused face, radiant in spite of ill-health with the light from within—a face it was so hard to turn one's eyes away from when she was in the room.

The present writer is among the fortunate who hold that the dead can still be reached by the love and gratitude that makes our loss so unbearable sometimes. This being so, one is glad, on second thoughts, to suffer, saying to oneself: 'They know what this pang means.' . . . And so to bed, comforted.

WHAT MATTERS MOST IN LIFE

'Tell me,' said a girl I once knew to her *fiancé*, who, according to rumour, was given to the study of ancient philosophies—'tell me *in one sentence* what Zoroaster's philosophy really amounts to?'

A request I was recently honoured with, to state 'briefly' what, in my opinion, matters most in life, reminded me of this incident. And well it might. For though I can say in exactly two words that what seems to me the most important thing in life is being happy, a second question inevitably follows, namely, 'How can happiness be achieved?' And to answer that conundrum briefly is to boil down the accumulated wisdom (or unwisdom, as the case may be) of a lifetime into a draught that shall be palatable, digestible, and of negotiable dimensions—a far harder thing to do than writing a small volume on the subject. That is a task any bore would be charmed to tackle gratis; it is just the sort of theme that attracts bores. The space allotted to me, however, having been only a few hundred lines, an attempt was made to deliver one's soul convincingly and gracefully in a strait waistcoat; more or less as follows.

Everyone, even the most original of us, belongs to a type; and the people I should specially like to address are those whose personality has a tendency to obscure their view of the rest of creation. Nearly all vital natures have this difficulty to contend with, and I remember the wisest and best friend I ever had warning me on the subject when I was a very young woman.

The receipt against it is : never, on principle, think about yourself at all, enthralling though the subject is. And if happiness be your goal, brood not over your failures, nor over the scant sympathy your best efforts often meet with. And—most important of all—never, never contrast your own hard lot with that of apparently less sorely-tried individuals.

For instance, hundreds of working women know what I really do not think men realise, how heavily the scales are weighted against us by our sex. When it is a question of descending into an arena where up to recent times only men have combatted, the rules of which have been framed by men, you are instantly up against a sort of moral, exceedingly impalpable 'vested interest.' This being so, wise women will begin by endeavouring to understand that, though our difficulties are in part due to man's prejudice and selfishness, they are also the result, as I shall try to show, of a natural law to which both sexes are subject. Once that truth is grasped, there is some chance of acquiring the serenity necessary to going ahead with your own job all the same and pulling it off satisfactorily in spite of the sex handicap.

I remember the first time it was brought home to me vividly that all human beings are by nature selfish, and as little inclined to modify innate points of view as the traditional peasant. My household consists of myself, one servant, and one big dog ; and since during the thirty-three years I have lived alone I have only had three servants, it may be concluded, perhaps, that the one human companion in my household does not have too bad a time. Yet, though the matter did not affect me personally, for in such an establishment things do not go very rigidly, when the custom of the 'day out' became law it was not wholly agreeable to my feelings. Thus I realised that I had been unconsciously clinging to the privilege of giving permission for what was now

claimable as a right. Since that day I judge men less harshly for clinging to *their* privileges, and trying to keep us out of this or that trade.

The truth is, that if nature, as we are told is the case, abhors a vacuum, human nature adores a monopoly. Let women realise this fact, and face the unpleasant consequences the male monopolies of the past involve with comprehension, courage, and good temper. Not for that reason yielding their right to fashion their lives as they please, but sternly repressing any inclination to make a grievance of their hardships, *even to themselves.*

I think that not only for women, not only in this connection, but in every sense, and for men and women alike, the secret of happiness is to get your angle to life as sane as the imperfections of your nature will allow. Talking about a certain musician—a good fellow and a true artist but rather more ambitious than his equipment justifies, a little inclined to fuss his colleagues, to be discontented, somewhat lacking in serenity and so on—talking about this young fellow, Sir Henry Wood once made a remark that struck me : ' You see,' he said, ' it takes a very delicate balance of qualities to achieve success.' And though I emphatically disclaim any competence to deliver lay sermons, I think that to keep your spiritual balance true, to get out of yourself the very best result the Creator had in mind when you were planned, is what Voltaire meant when he told us to ' cultivate our garden.'

Success and happiness are by no means synonymous, but I am certain that cultivating your garden is the sole way to be happy ; only you must dig and plant with all your heart, for doing things by halves is the most boring thing in the world. (For that reason I feel sure that ' ca' canny ' must be a male invention ; women would never have hit upon such a tiresome form of foolishness.) And another thing ; if engaged in a prolonged effort,

strangle at birth all temptations to slack off, such as asking yourself 'Is it worth while dragging this weight up an endless hill for ever and ever?' Or, if you are a writer, 'Am I so dead sure that what I have to say is worth saying?' I don't think it much matters what your activities are—whether writing, composing, entertaining, running a household, sport, serving on the County Council, or doing parish work—provided they do not make you a nuisance to all your friends. But I do know that if nature has not obligingly furnished you with a 'must,' wise people will create one for themselves, and carry on whether they want to or no.

The whole secret lies in the mixture of zeal and determination with which you pursue your end; given that, any 'must' will serve your turn. I remember my father telling us about somebody's housemaid who remarked that since her conversion—result of hearing Dr. Spurgeon preach—she loved her work 'because now I sweep under the hearthrug.' There it is! She had contrived to put a spark of passion into her daily round, which is not an impossible miracle once you have got rid of the fantastic notion that everyone else's task is more interesting, more noble, more something or other than your own. All tasks are three-quarters drudgery, but a certain quantum of interest and fun can be got out of any pursuit whatsoever. . . .

Yet stay! I have heard of one task that might well defeat even such enthusiasm as that of my converted housemaid. . . . 'To think of it!' sighed the widowed sister of two unspeakably filthy old market gardeners who live not a thousand miles from my home—'to think of me, that was wife of a colour-sergeant in the 22nd Foot, come to this . . . doin' for the old men and trying to keep 'em from stinking!' Now, apart from a certain inherent lack of charm in the career adopted by poor Mrs. J., part of it is so manifestly a failure—as

anyone standing to leeward of 'the old men' can but perceive—that one must hedge a little about there being potential rapture in any and every pursuit. But, as we were taught in the schoolroom, the exception is handmaiden to the rule.

One final word. I was requested to treat this subject in all sincerity, and have done so. But no expression of opinion on my part would be genuine or characteristic unless qualified by the words, 'Mind, this is merely a personal standpoint.' I have known delightful people, and in books I have met with equally delightful people, who would repudiate with horror the views advanced above. But my favourite motto has always been, 'In my father's house are many mansions.' These objectors live in another part of the edifice; there is room for them and me, and all I profess to have been doing is trying to describe my own flat. So, if we meet on the stairs there need be no ill-feeling!

ON ROUGHING IT

However one may feel about people who are no longer young, I imagine there can be no two opinions as to the advantages of having been called upon to rough it in one's youth. Personally, I would go farther, and say that the habit of taking discomfort easily should never be dropped, while that of digging fun out of encountering difficulties (and you never have to dig very deep) should be sedulously acquired, unless you happen to have been born with it. If we can talk of anyone getting good out of such a ghastly thing as war, I am certain that having 'to do without' must have been the making of many young fellows who themselves would never have believed when they were at home how easily the so-called necessities of civilised existence can be dispensed with.

It is, perhaps, no credit to a person like the present writer who has always disliked luxury, and whose idea of bliss is to simplify life as much as possible—it is, I say, no credit to such a one actually to enjoy the roughness of rough travel, for instance. Yet, it seems to me that almost anyone if he turns his mind that way might find pleasure in having to pit his wits against unfavourable circumstances ; finding out how to be comfortable in impossible inns ; how to get to such and such a place when the means of getting there are wholly lacking, and so on. Yet two years ago, when I and a young relative went on a voyage of exploration through the less-known parts of Greece, we were amazed, when we came back and related our experiences, to hear many people who

ought to have known better exclaim : ' How could you put up with such discomfort ! '

Discomfort, indeed ! Why, on the contrary, the sophistication of beautiful places like Sicily, and the terribly efficient arrangements of tourist agencies along beaten tracks rob travel of half its charm according to some of us !

Myself, I think that one of the secrets of happiness is being independent. For two years (1883–4) I cooked for myself. It was in Italy, and needless to say the hot midday meal was very simple, and the cold evening one came from the provision shop ; but it never struck me that to cook for oneself is a hardship, and I was surprised when a passing friend seemed to take that view.

The best of roughing it is that it brings you into easy contact with all sorts and conditions of men ; an advantage denied to those of the sheltered life, unless, indeed, they turn the study of queer human specimens into a deliberate pursuit, like golf or fly-fishing, which would rob the thing of half its charm. I maintain that nothing steels you more effectually against the shocks to your refined susceptibilities with which life bristles than having been pitchforked by fate into all sorts of odd adventures and places.

Think, for instance, of what may happen any moment nowadays when youth and beauty invades the railway compartment in which you are peacefully seated, wishing no harm to anyone. Presently some young lady will open a beauty bag and proceed to clean up her face in public, opening her mouth and stretching her lips to get the line of lip-salve straight, pulling down her under-eyelid to make a good shot at an eyelash, and so on. Well, if half your life you have put up, as a matter of course, with the company that frequents cheap restaurants abroad, you have insensibly become inured to such terrible sights that even this nauseating spectacle will not rob you of

your self-control. Being but human you naturally endeavour to get your newspaper between the operator and yourself, but thanks to past discipline you will not make matters worse by being actually sick.

The point, I imagine, of holding forth on this or any other subject (I mean about roughing it) is to say what you really think, and I confess I am all in favour of not letting yourself get soft. This is a practical age, an age of labour-saving devices, and I fear that a lot of people have an exaggerated dislike of discomfort. For instance, though my young male relations will think it old-fashioned of me to feel thus, I do not like to see a boy of twenty buying a covered car because open cars are less comfortable ; in fact, the careers I watch with anxiety are those of gifted young people who literally want for nothing ; who have not had to fight their way into the thick of things, or struggle up roads so steep and stony that courage has to be brewed afresh every day. If they are worth anything of course they will not be stopped for want of early training in dealing with difficulties. But all the same it's a handicap.

I think I am in favour of anything that helps you to take trying circumstances as the rule, not as the exception, in your course through this world ; that develops resourcefulness and good temper under such conditions ; in a word, that renders you physically and spiritually fit. All of which is my reason for holding that to be obliged to rough it is the best thing that can happen—not only to the young, but to most of us.

AN IRON THESIS ON OPERA

A WISE and wealthy old man, the late Mr. Forbes—at one time Chairman of one of the Eastern Railways, and owner of a fine collection of modern pictures—once related to me a piece of advice given him, when he was a young and ambitious nobody, by just such another wise and wealthy old man as he himself was at the time I met him. It was about persuading committees to come round to your way of thinking. 'Suppose,' said his Mentor, 'there are twenty men sitting round a big table. Fix your eyes on the stupidest-looking man of the lot, and, in very simple language, put your case *to him*. Then fix the next stupidest and do exactly the same thing; then a third, and so on, up and up, right through the lot.' Young Mr. Forbes was further told, that when he had got to about the sixteenth man he might permit himself a little more subtlety, go more into detail and so on ; but generally speaking he was begged to remember that nothing short of twenty repetitions of the same proposition would get it really home to twenty men.

I have been acting on this advice as regards opera for at least twenty years, saying the same thing over and over again ; and now perhaps it is not rash to hope that the last four or five men have been reached, and that one may venture to expound one's idea more floridly than seemed advisable hitherto. Moreover, to tell the truth, it is only of late years that certain new convictions have formed in my mind, the chief among them being, I regret to say, that there is such a thing as racial predestination in art,

and that the expression of high dramatic passion, more especially on the field of music, is all but incompatible with Anglo-Saxon blood pressure. We may have been differently tempered once; but whether thanks to puritanism, industrialism, sport mania, or what you please, to-day we are recalcitrant to great tragic art. In fact one can safely say that, with the exception of frequenters of football and boxing matches, the race is anti-Dionysiac.

How, pray, should it be otherwise? Does not our whole culture discourage loud voices, extravagant gestures, and violent demonstrations of all kinds? Now the repose that stamps the class of Vere de Vere is a fine ideal in its way, and fashions a magnificent breed of self-controlled, self-contained citizens; people who when fires break out at bazaars will not trample women and children to death, nor, when afflicted with 'catarrh,' advertise the fact in the manner of less highly disciplined races. But, unfortunately, a habit of reserve militates against the free expression of the passions in public—on the stage for instance—and is generally unfavourable to the suppling up and training of great dramatic actor-singers. Our operatic renderings always seem to me more like what is called 'markiren' in Germany; that is, the mere *indication* of the musical and dramatic line which is all that singers who have delicate vocal chords give at rehearsal.

Now these temperamental deficiencies of ours could be got over to a large extent by training; and if I insist upon them here, it is (1) because any chance of betterment is nullified by our obstinate clinging to the hideous fetish of touring; (2) because I believe our race is brimming with talent for another form of art than 'grand' opera, namely, light, or *non*-grand opera, to cultivate which would be a manageable proposition both financially and otherwise. As regards that form of the

art we so vulgarly call ' Grand,' I should think even the most anglophile writer to the Press must perceive, when certain foreign artists take the stage at Covent Garden, that here you have the result not only of a great tradition (which makes self-development an easy task for those who are lucky enough to come under its sway), but of a certain quality lacking in us English which I can only call incandescence. We are sluggish burners, and of that coal you cannot manufacture the terrific express-train heat that must be kindled between an artist and the art he is interpreting if the heights and depths of passion are to be expressed. There are exceptions of course ; or rather you sometimes come across English artists who were endowed originally with the quality of passion but have gradually fallen into the English habit of getting along with a minimum of it ; as it might be an economical housewife keeping the wick low to save oil. Watch our musicians at work and see if this is not too often what is happening. Wizards can sometimes break down this reserve ; I myself once overheard Nikisch saying to a compatriot of his after a concert at the Queen's Hall : ' I can't get that tone from the strings in Berlin.' But as a rule English musicians leave a remarkably wide margin of calm round their emotions, and what you never get on the operatic stage is that utter self-abandonment, held together in iron bands of disciplined art, which is the only thing that will do.

If anyone fancies that in saying this I am running down my own people, such a fool ought not to be answered even according to his own folly. But I may as well remark in passing, that I believe this slow, tenacious burning of the Anglo-Saxon race to be its greatest asset. This it was that eventually broke Napoleon's power, that made one able to assure Frenchmen and Italians during the late war that if all the rest of the allies cried off England would fight on alone. But this quality is

not essential to the inspired exposition of great tragic art ; on the contrary, rather hampering, I should fancy. You can't have it both ways.

No doubt there are fairly good English singers scattered about the world. Why not ? We are a well-built people, our ear is excellent, and some of us have voices, though most of these hail from Australia. Isolated individuals, therefore, if caught young and kneaded by some really fine operatic machine, of which there are dozens on the Continent, may well give a good account of themselves. Alas ! it is that same machine (as I like to call it) which is so direfully lacking here ; an intricate complex, fashioned gradually by time, experience, and love of music ; a thing that has been born by and grinds out tradition ; that includes an iron organisation and a public at once expert, critical, and enthusiastic.

And the question is how to set about creating a machine of this kind in the industrially-minded England of to-day.

This much is certain. Any scheme that does not start with the principle of digging itself in somewhere and boldly proclaiming that touring is death to art, will not be worth the paper it is drawn up on. Even if, like a snail, an opera troupe could carry its house about with it, the dispersing, devastating effect of being always on the move would remain. Who that has ever had a glimpse of the life led by a company on tour can forget the horrors witnessed—horrors the infatuated victims take as a matter of course ! The train journeys; the hotel life ; the hasty adapting of scenery to stages too large or too small for it ; the truck-load of ' props ' that has been sent off to Glasgow by mistake instead of remaining in Leeds ; the ' Siegmund ' tree that ought to be sheltering the lovers in Manchester but is now reposing in a siding at Birmingham ! And the inevitable

scamping of rehearsals ; and the tenor one hopes will be back from his concert engagement by the time the curtain goes up. Not to speak of the young conductor who boasts, as one did rashly to me, that last week he conducted ' the Meistersinger ' for the first time in his life, and that without a rehearsal ! And of course the usual old gentleman had come up afterwards and declared that nothing finer could be heard at Bayreuth. Notwithstanding which I rather surprised the young conductor by remarking that, properly speaking, a bolt from heaven ought to have consumed him and his bâton then and there. If the absurd and sorry spectacle of Mr. Vincent Crummles still on tour in the proud glare of the twentieth century leaves your complacency undisturbed, think, think of the appalling waste of precious energy, every ounce of which should be devoted to the art itself !

And what of the public, whose training is at least as important as that of the company ? What educative, what nutritive value is there in snacks and snippets of opera served up during a week or so of the year, one among many other variety shows ? If you want people to take up a given pursuit as a life habit, you must first induce them to acquire a taste for it, and then make it impossible for them to drop it. This, if I remember right, was what Mr. Fagin described to Oliver Twist as his guiding principle in the training of his young friends. No one would be mad enough to believe you could make an unsporting nation take to hunting by touring the country with a pack of hounds. But as regards opera we are in Cloud-Cuckoo-Land where anything and everything seems possible ; and as our pride forbids us to take hints from countries where opera is part of the national life, there you are ! We may or may not be aware that Arabs could never have built up their magnificent civilisation had they not abandoned their nomadic

habits . . . but building up things is such a bore! Don't let's try to do that whatever happens!

I have the greatest admiration for the pluck and resourcefulness of touring companies: I marvel that they achieve as much as they do, and am aware that they give many people a lot of pleasure. But this does not alter the fact that, culturally speaking, they are not only useless but *worse* than useless, inasmuch as they stand between purblind eyes and the only vision that has redemption in it—the vision of an Opera House founded on a rock.

Before finally quitting the subject of Grand Opera for the far more congenial topic of light opera (observe that the capitals have been dropped!) I should like to answer a question I am often asked, and which oddly enough was put to me only a few days ago by a colleague to whom I was expounding the above views. 'How comes it,' he said, 'that feeling as you do about the lack of Dionysian frenzy in the English musical temperament, you have nevertheless written an opera which, I understand, is on ultra-Dionysiac lines—a Cornish story all about wrecking, religion, love, and that sort of thing?'

The answer is quite simple. That craggy coast round which I walked in 1886 is still haunted by a desperate past, and the general idea of 'The Wreckers' came to me in one of those caves in the Scilly Isles that run out under the sea—a cave where even in calm weather you hear, close over your head, the soft thunder of rocks pushed about by the tide. Many years later that dream-vision of mine was passed on to another to handle; but though the story, together with every line of the text and every bar of the music, is fiercely, exclusively English, nothing was farther from my mind when composing it than a performance in my own country. In those days there was no such thing as English Opera, and the words,

originally written in French, were eventually translated into German for Nikisch, who as I said elsewhere had accepted the work for its first performance in Leipzig, but was 'given notice' by the Town Council immediately afterwards, owing to his sublime disregard of expenditure!

Some day perhaps, after the work has been properly given on the Continent (as most assuredly will happen, though not I expect in my lifetime)—some day, when the types have been established once for all by the great tragic artists that abound in other climes, but can never spring up on English soil as things are now—then, I say, some pale reflection of 'The Wreckers' as it was conceived by H. B. who wrote the story and by me who wrote the music, may be cast on the English stage. But before even that much can happen, operatic England, to quote Mrs. Poyser, must be 'hatched again, and hatched different.'

II

It is pleasant to turn from the contemplation of a department of art in which I believe nature did not intend us to shine, to one in which, if our natural gifts were exploited, we should quite certainly achieve supremacy.

One of the things I am for ever saying to the twenty gentlemen seated round the board is, that in my humble opinion we are probably the most humorous race in the world. And quite recently it has occurred to me that the very surface reserve that cramps our style in the domain of tragic passion has probably favoured the growth of this fine, extra-thick pelt of comicality, even as the arctic climate is responsible for the under-coat of the polar bear. Anyhow it is certain that nothing astonished the French more—I fear it even alienated them a little—than the never-failing humour of the British soldier. And a fact which seems to bear out my

theory as to the present trend of our race is, that the most living literature for the stage produced in this country since Elizabethan times, travelling downward from the Restoration drama, through Sheridan, to Oscar Wilde and Bernard Shaw, is in the realm of comedy.

Finally, please observe that England's sole original contribution to the musical wealth of the world since Purcell's day has been in the domain of light opera. Symphonies, oratorios, concertos, 'grand' operas, all these things other nations have done better than we can. But what of Gilbert and Sullivan—the combination, that is, of a humorist unlike any other and a composer quite as unique, whose music enchants not only my great friend and blood-brother the man in the street but profound musicians,—that is, if they are profound enough. A greater master of melody and of rhythm has never existed ; and what is more, appraised by the organs we bring to bear on technical masterpieces like the canon in 'Fidelio,' for instance, his work survives the test. This exquisite, joy-giving art, this gracious flowering of the spirit, is not only English but unthinkable save on England's soil. If ever country has been furnished with a polar star for the orientation of its true genius it is the country that produced Gilbert and Sullivan. And if Sullivan was an Irishman with Jewish blood in his veins, and supposing Gilbert had been a Red Indian, their art is as English as Robin Hood.

Now what are the facilities in this country for the cultivation of non-grand opera ? The answer is, there are none. Even on the safe field of the production of classics (*vide* the admirable little 'Cosi fan Tutte' season that petered out after a few weeks for lack of support) there is no solid ground under one's feet. True, at one moment the prospects of home-made non-grand opera looked rather hopeful. 'The Beggar's Opera' seemed unlikely ever to stop playing ; Sir Barry Jackson had

made a popular success of 'The Immortal Hour' (we did not then know that he had lost £8000 over it, playing for weeks to empty houses) and 'Ferelon' and 'The Bosun' were being given at the Old Vic (O, how well they did 'The Bosun' !). But since those days our star has declined rapidly. Perhaps it never was a star at all; only a firework, doomed in the natural course of things to declension and extinction.

Anyhow at the present time the prospects of non-grand opera, whether home-made or otherwise, are darker than ever. All we get is a spurt here, a splash there; and each of these sporadic ventures has to be organised afresh from the humblest detail upwards, as though it were a case of running opera for the first time in Honolulu. When the electric light in the orchestra goes out you are supposed to laugh; when the conductor's desk turns turtle in the middle of the performance, never mind! it's all in the day's work! And, strange to relate, thanks to some one person working like a nigger, the results obtained in the end are simply amazing. For this country is full of talent for light opera, and who shall describe the zeal, the good temper of the young people you have to deal with?

All the same, there comes a time when you get sick of the Honolulu element, the everlasting struggle for the ABC of theatrical amenities. Nor am I certain that the 'keep on smiling' policy adopted by conductors who are secretly bursting with rage, but who argue that unless you accept all this you can't put through anything at all, is defensible, either artistically or ethically. I rather think times are ripe for a cleansing of the temple by someone with a thong of whipcord. But, so far, no young fellow I have met,—no, nor even middle-aged fellow—appears to yearn for the office! And no doubt consciences are soothed by the reflection that our national genius lies in the direction of compromise. Unfortu-

nately this spirit, which won't do in art, has reduced us to such a state of spinelessness in things musical that we seem to have lost all desire for self-criticism, all power to feel shame.

Anyhow for my part I have come to the conclusion that the terrific expenditure of vital force is altogether out of proportion to results obtained ; which are this sort of thing. Two performances ; then a couple of years' pause ; then three performances, followed by two more years' pause ; and so on. To quote my own remark as child of eight to my astonished grandmother : 'This is so little pudding I can't eat it.' And as even that much doesn't happen of its own accord unless you are in a certain swim ; and as I shall never again raise a finger to get any of my three light operas performed ; and as it is therefore improbable that they will ever be staged again, I am publishing the libretti of the two comic ones, 'The Bosun's Mate' and 'Entente Cordiale,' in this book. Anyone who has knowledge of stage-craft will easily see that given music appropriate to the text they are bound to come off *if adequately rehearsed* ; (I am aware of the irony of this proviso) and, as regards 'The Bosun,' many have been in a position, thanks chiefly to Miss Baylis, to judge for themselves. As for 'Entente Cordiale' which is practically unknown, Messrs. Curwen have published the Pianoforte Score ; so anyone who wishes to examine it musically can do so.

Let us not deceive ourselves. On this field, as on the other, nothing will meet the case but stable conditions. One would think that to put non-grand opera on a permanent footing must be, as I said before, a problem of manageable size ; and it is such an entrancing form of art in itself, apart from the fact that it runs with our grain ! The great question would be, of course, building slowly from the bottom upwards, how best to create

a tradition. For tradition is the outcome of continuity, and continuity is a thing that has to be paid for. Anyone can manage the splash and spurt business, and our operatic life has so far been a series of isolated puddles. But what we want is a stream.

Now I had never forgotten a remark made to me in the Dark Ages by Mr. Arthur Balfour, as he was then ; 'The Government only make grants in the furtherance of *education*,' he had said, 'and you'll never persuade an English Government that opera is anything but an *amusement*.' The principle that determines grants no doubt is the same to-day, but the outlook has changed in the other matter, and considering all things I saw no harm in thinking out what could be done. The result of these meditations I once summarised in one of the daily newspapers, remarking that at all events the foundation was common sense, and the motto 'Begin at the beginning.' But as I still believe—and I am not alone in that belief—that out of this acorn a good tree might grow, I should like to state the thing more fully here.

The idea was this : the establishment of a Students' Opera House, to be located in some suburb of London and fed by promising pupils of our various musical institutions. A managing committee, consisting of the three heads of our three London musical colleges and one or two other bigwigs, would select the staff, including the person who is called in Germany 'General Music Director.' Non-grand opera to play for nine months of the year. Grand opera and touring absolutely forbidden. Training to include enunciation, moving on the stage, acting, dancing, etc. To start with, a repertory of three or four classical non-grand operas (by Handel, Mozart, Gluck, Purcell, etc.). *The production of works of a non-grand description by English composers to be a main object.*

Finally, as this institution would be the outcome and extension of processes already aided by the State (our musical colleges are subsidised, though not to the tune of £300,000 per annum which is what you and I cheerfully give to the British Museum), a subsidy, guaranteed for at least five years, to be provided by the Government, the London County Council, the Municipality, or all three. (I think a strong case could be put up for this claim, and I should have had pleasure in making that my department !)

I worked the matter out thoroughly with experts ; of course it was merely an embryo, but people like Sir Barry Jackson, Professor E. Dent, Sir Henry Wood (who began his musical career as operatic conductor), and Mr. Robert Courtneidge pronounced the idea to be sound and absolutely realisable. It was not an ambitious scheme—no more ambitious than planting a young tree in good soil and making it worth several people's while to watch over its growth. And, as students were concerned, it was not an expensive scheme ; in fact, at a rough estimate, a subsidy of £25,000 per annum should be ample.

Alas ! in the eyes of our operatic megalomaniacs a project that is humble, practical, and cheap, is damned to start with ; and people who can't do with anything less than ' grand ' opera would probably shrink from subjecting our young people to the indignity of being taught to walk before they run. Nor was megalomania the only difficulty. I at once became aware of mysterious undercurrents which people accustomed to sailing the Seas of Compromise would probably recognise as ' vested interests.' These and sentimentality combined. Honoured Mandarins who really count would look dubious and murmur : ' I fear this project might do the B.N.O.C. harm, and I am sure that Sir X. Y., who you say is inclined to favour it, would not wish that ! '

Whereupon I would stare, and enquire how a student-company, absolutely debarred from touching 'grand opera' or touring, could possibly damage a touring company with a repertory of some 25 operas? On the contrary, it seemed to me my scheme should feed all our various nomadic troupes and the Old Vic as well. I also urged that if a thing is good in itself and calculated to build up what we chiefly need, a tradition, surely it should not be repudiated because existing institutions, with quite other ends in view, possibly prefer to have no rivals in the field at all (for at one moment this seemed to be the implication). A dog-in-the-manger policy, I insisted, is not only ugly but a sign of weakness and stupidity; why! my friend Mr. Robert Courtneidge even maintains that a success at one theatre is good for the theatre business all round; which really coincides with my own conviction, that the more fine creative work put forth and well produced, the better for each individual composer.

Probably such notions do not commend themselves to the guardians of vested interests; anyhow, though I failed to elicit a single good argument against my plan, one was evidently up against something both resistant and intangible. 'Thank you *so* much for showing me this scheme,' one interlocutor after another would say, as he warmly shook my hand at the end of the interview. 'It is most interesting and we must think it over! *Good*bye!'

The sinister feature was, that all this time the only real snag—the thought of which, I confess, rather daunted me myself—was never even alluded to: namely, the difficulty of getting three or more independent potentates to forget their own little dramatic shows, or at least to work them with a view to the general cause in which they would eventually be merged. And as to the choice of a General Music Director, supreme head

of this students' opera house, one thought with a sinking heart of the millions of men who had to die ere the sole command was put through in France. . . .

But bless you, my scheme never got as far as the consideration of this or any other snag ! And when I call it ' my ' scheme, I beg the reader to believe that my sole wish was to provide an idea which I hoped responsible persons would work up into a sound four-square edifice, I myself having less to do with it than a haystack has with the bird that builds the nest. I cannot say the thing was turned down ; it never was even turned up. And though it is in a safe place and can be produced when required, I fear that only a minority settle down, on this particular subject, to the examination of practical issues. The rest prefer the periodical emission of self-contradictory sentiments such as ' Opera *ought* to pay,'—' What more do we want than the B.N.O.C. ? '—' The English do not really *want* opera, as the financial plight of the B.N.O.C. clearly proves,' and so on *ad libitum* ! [1]

Well ! perhaps some other scheme will come along presently, but one cannot repeat often enough that the two foundation stones must be immobility (no touring) and a big subsidy. However it may have been with Noah's dramatic troupe, the non-grand Opera House of my dreams will find itself firmly anchored to one spot ; and the subsidy has to be liberal because one of its chief objects will be *habitual and lavishly rehearsed productions of new English works*. Nothing is more costly ; for not only does a new opera seldom pay at once, but before you can know its real quality, and before it can strike root, however good it may be, it must have been played again and again to audiences trained to listen—like the audience at the Old Vic. And all the time even this above-the-average public will probably be saying on each

[1] Since writing the above Sir Thomas Beecham's scheme of a National Opera League has been launched : see *P.S.*

such occasion, and for years to come : ' I do wish they'd chuck this modern stuff and give us things we know and like ! ' (what I call the dressing-gown and slippers frame of mind, a thing not wholly unheard of even in countries less lethargic, artistically, than ours !). Yet, as I have often remarked, a country that is not putting forth ' modern stuff,' and insisting, too, on its being produced, has either not yet reached puberty or is suffering from senile decay. Let reactionaries and intellectual sluggards take their choice. Meanwhile, being what we are, an English Opera Director will need both cash and courage if he is to keep in the right path, whereas foreign municipalities actually vote their subsidy among other reasons *in order to have the right to demand of their Director the production of novelties !* Wonderful, isn't it ?

As things are now in England our travelling companies will occasionally produce and take on tour a new opera which, for some reason or other, *it pays them to lose money over* ; for such pangs are sometimes worth while. But if they are only playing in such and such a town for a week or so, the public naturally wants to hear old favourites, although, as a point of honour, they may insist on seeing a well-boomed novelty at all events once. Now let us make a calculation. If that novelty is played once or twice every year in five or six towns, it may become a classic in 100 years. But you can't bring a school of British Opera composers into being on those lines ! The thing is derisory, a make-believe, a throwing of dust into eyes that find it convenient not to see clearly.

III

Meanwhile, whatever scheme may be brought forward for putting non-grand opera on a permanent footing, we must face the fact that in the department for which I maintain we have special genius, the comic line, a solemn

phalanx of highbrows will be arrayed against us. For these self-appointed upholders of the 'noble' in art are under the impression that comedy is a lower form of drama than tragedy; a point of view that would surely have astonished Shakespeare or Molière, though I believe it was that of Napoleon.

Now the Universities have always played a preponderant part in English music; almost as great a one as in the Church (which perhaps accounts for the Siamese-Twin-like connection between music and religion that still survives in the provincial mind), and the highbrow is essentially a University product. To be frank, this influence seems to me wholly deplorable. What we need in our musical outlook is oxygen, and I cannot bear to see the freshness and innocence of would-be cultivated amateurs smiled or sneered away by these pretentious graduates in the school of Professor Stodge. Against Gilbert and Sullivan, though they have tried their best, they are of course powerless. But in the domain of 'serious' music, their high moral tone and their total lack of sense of humour renders them potent for mischief.

Let me give a couple of instances from my own experience.

Confronted by the text of 'Hey Nonny No,' a gorgeous Elizabethan poem from an Oxford MS., two members of the Committee of a certain Choral Society, both of them members, too, of the choir, announced that nothing would induce them to utter such sentiments as

> Is't not fine
> To swim in wine
> And turn upon the toe
> And sing Hey nonny no
> When the winds blow
> And the seas flow!
> Hey nonny no!

And with this protest they believed they were voicing (so they said) the secret feeling of most of the choir.

Advised by the Chorus Master of the situation, at first I thought it must be a joke. Not at all; it was just an unforeseeable cropping-up of the nonconformist conscience! Now apart from the ludicrousness of the thing, to alter the words in 300 vocal parts is a terrific business. But apparently there was nothing else to be done, so I suggested that the first lines (for these I imagined were the rock of offence) should be changed to :

Is't not brave
To mock the wave
And turn upon the toe!

About this there is a sort of Wardour St. Elizabethan tang that would pass muster at a pinch ; and I did not quite see my way to propose the reading kindly supplied by my friend Miss E. Œ. Somerville :

Is't not fine?
Hot milk at nine
And straight to bed we go!

In the end, however, neither emendation was necessary. Robuster counsels prevailed and the Choir gave a fine rendering of the work with unbowdlerised words, even revelling, so it seemed to me, in their licentiousness. But a country in which these moral seismic disturbances may occur any moment is an agitating place to practise your art in.

The second instance is even more amazing, and proves to what extent the vulgar aroma that hangs about a certain dreadful term mentioned more than once in these pages has poisoned what Jenny Lind used to call 'Gawd's air.'

After an excellent performance of 'The Bosun' at Manchester—a performance too late, alas! to retrieve the effects of a scandalously under-rehearsed one at Covent Garden—the business Director of the B.N.O.C.

informed me that, financially speaking, the evening had been unsatisfactory. 'Well, anyhow they liked the thing,' I said, 'for they never stopped laughing from start to finish.' 'Ah,' he replied gloomily, '*but suppose they don't want to laugh?*' . . .

I fancy my excusably petulant comment at the time was that of course if people confound opera with divine service there is nothing more to be said. But on reflection it occurred to me that if a public has been taught to believe that 'Grand' opera is the only thing that counts, it will not consider it is getting its money's worth unless wallowing in tragic, *i.e.* 'grand,' emotions. Abroad the same Opera House has 'Tristan' one day and 'Fledermaus' the next. Here a sandwiched-in light opera—and mind, it has to be a classic—is only put up with as an exception; an experiment in questionable taste that must not be often repeated. As it were Dean Inge making a pun or throwing a cart-wheel.

Throwing eternal cart-wheels myself on this everlasting subject of opera, weighing words and phrases, pondering how to put this or that detail so convincingly that even the most wooden-headed champion of the nomadic system, the most fluffy-minded 'constant reader,' the richest newspaper proprietor with a contrary 'stunt' to run, cannot fail to see the point, or at least can no longer feign blindness; I say, brooding over this opera business, I am suddenly pulled up by the tragic-comic thought of what any cultivated continental—not an expert but just an ordinary opera goer—would say if he heard one labouring truths so patent, so elementary, so utterly incontestable as those I am trying to drive home! And a sudden feeling of humiliation steals into the soul, as though one were explaining to grown-ups that unless they practise washing they will not be pleasant people to share a small room with. . . .

Friends, Britons, countrymen, I entreat you lend me your eyes ; pooh-pooh my theories if you like, but let me focus your vision on someone else's practice. Is it my fault if, whenever I mention opera, I mention a special name—that of the one person who exactly proves the contention of my life : viz. that if you will only sit still and not go rushing about the country dragging the roots of your art along the surface of the ground, with the absurd notion of thereby creating several gardens of art, then art will have some chance of striking root of its own accord ? Once more I say to you, consider . . . if not the lilies of the field, yet Lilian Baylis—that very different and most amazing flower grown in the unpromising soil of New Cut. She, a mere woman, consequently intensely practical and no megalomaniac, began by seeing, as in a vision, a great idea ; she then set to work, on quite humble lines, to realise it, and lo ! by degrees she has done what no one else has done on any lines at all ; she has created a dramatic tradition. And when it occurred to her that opera might help matters, she started having it—again on modest lines ; only three operas a week. True, the policy of which I was the lucky beneficiary was not persisted in. Her music-lord hates new music, and though her audience were delighted to flirt with something very English and unhighbrow like ' The Bosun's Mate ' (and O how well it was done there too !) the box-office returns proved that they did not love their Bosun quite connubially, so to speak ; not in the ' with all my worldly goods I thee endow ' style reserved for ' Cav ' and ' Pag ' and ' The Bo Girl.' Given what we know of our conservative audiences it would be unreasonable to expect anything else. Meanwhile, at the Old Vic there are Mozart performances that give me more pleasure than most other English Mozart productions I have seen, because the music is sufficiently rehearsed, the performances compact of life and reverence, and above all because the Old Vic

audience (quite a different one to the equally staunch Shakespeare public) is there from passion, not from fashion. These people show the qualities that, as I said above, belong to trained audiences only ; they are at once ' expert, critical, and enthusiastic.' And a year or two ago, in the middle of one of the ' Mozart Festivals ' someone in the stalls yelled out : ' Good old Mozart ' !

All this has been achieved by one woman who was not too proud—or shall I say too ' grand '—to start on unambitious lines. Need one point the moral ?

P.S.—Since writing the above Sir Thomas Beecham's scheme for a British Opera League has appeared. I think it a capital one as far as it goes, and one is glad to think it will probably put the tenacious and devoted B.N.O.C. on its legs. Otherwise, to an implacable foe of touring, the main point is, of course, ' the eventual aim—to build and endow a London Opera House.' This tortuous route *may* be the only road thither ; anyhow it is the one that most appeals to the brilliant brain that conceived the idea of the League.

At foreign Opera Houses, in spite of the great tradition that upholds them, there is a sort of sublimated trainer (generally some great artist, such as Anna Mildenburg at Munich), whose office it is to drive into each unit the musical and dramatic significance of each rôle. If some such coach were imported from any of the various countries where opera is daily bread, our English singers could possibly be converted into dramatic instruments in spite of our terrible constitutional reserve.

Anyhow I am delighted to note that the British Opera League would in no way interfere with some *non*-grand opera scheme as sketched above. For thereon, I maintain, chiefly depends the evolution of a real school of British Opera composers.

January, 1928.

A NEW DEPARTURE IN COMIC OPERA

[Preface to 'The Boatswain's Mate' and 'Entente Cordiale']

I

In the preceding chapter it was explained that, as no facilities exist in England for the regular production of Light Opera, the libretti of my two efforts in the line of *Comedy written for a Musical Setting* are being printed here; and I should like to say a few words about them.

In the spoken part of 'The Boatswain's Mate' I of course embodied as much as I could of Mr. Jacobs' inimitable dialogue, ekeing out his gems with pebbles picked up on the shores of the Nile at Helouan where I was staying at the time; as it might be a jeweller trying to match priceless pearls. But certain constructive features, such as the policeman episode, the tipsy agriculturists, the figure of Mary Ann, the Finale, and of course all the lyrics, are my own.

The general notion of 'Entente Cordiale' I owe to the late Robert Ross, who told me one night at dinner about a ridiculous mistake, involving a French market-woman, an English soldier, and a marriage contract, that had happened during his recent stay at a base camp near Armentières. 'What a capital one-act opera that would make!' I had exclaimed, and his reply was: 'Exactly; I have been saving it up for you!' True, in 1917 none felt like writing comic operas, but one knew the mood would return some day.

'Entente Cordiale' was admirably produced in 1925

on two successive nights by the students of the Royal College of Music, but as these performances are, strictly speaking, 'Dress Rehearsals' it is not considered etiquette to discuss them in the Press. The following year four excellent performances were given in Dr. Napier Miles's opera season at Bristol; but I am told the work was hardly commented on in the newspapers—'probably because it had already been performed at the R.C.M.!' Hence 'Entente Cordiale' is practically unknown, and the best one can look to for both operas, given the state of things operatic in England, is the fate of Rip van Winkle.

If ever the moment comes for reviving the sleepers I would suggest that they awake to the sound of a piano. Why break the back of your enterprise financially by having an orchestra at all? Why waste hours over orchestral rehearsals—and what rehearsals!—when every second of your time is needed for getting the action and the fun across?—more especially as the diction of our singers is so very inadequate, 'voice production' having apparently destroyed even the *idea* of articulation. Yet comic opera depends above all else on diction and acting! So, again I say it, scrap the orchestra. It is amateurish to be more ambitious than practical.

II

And now I should like to formulate the humble aim that underlies the creation of these two essentially English comedies, and say why the title of this chapter speaks of a 'new departure.'

I do not know if anyone has remarked that though many foreign nations have set contemporary life to music it has not been done here. Gilbert's genius was essentially fantastic, and to the best of my belief no living English composer (I am not speaking of Revue of course) has chosen the present day as setting for his work. But

whoever has, or has not, done so, I myself wanted to do it, simply because it comes naturally to me to see romance as well as comicality in what is going on under my own nose.

There are, no doubt, advantages in dealing with epochs one degree farther removed from reality than our own day. The love element, for instance, is more manageable in fancy dress, staged, say, in Fairyland, Ruritania, Elizabethan times, or even the eighteenth century. Producers, too, have a weakness for a picturesque framework, and probably, in their subconscious fashion, an average audience would be of the same mind ; especially people who have been deflected from homeliness and simplicity by *feuilleton* romance and by all those inflated notions about art that are so fitly summarised in the symptomatic word ' grand.' Such a person would probably feel that a fantastic setting ' takes you more out of yourself.' (Good heavens !)

But the musical comedy audiences, the public I secretly hanker after but cannot get at, don't feel like this at all ; not all the time anyway. And what I try to do in my comedies is to bring out the human side, pathetic or funny as the case may be, just as it comes along in our twentieth century ; not dressed up, either, but in its ordinary workaday clothes. I do not even take types of my own day and serve them up in burlesque sauce, as Gilbert has so deliciously done in ' Patience ' and ' Pinafore ' ; my object is to set life to music as I myself have seen and overheard it, in trains, in buses, in my own village, on my own golf course.

I have no principle to defend, no desire even to discuss the ethics or aesthetics of the matter. I am simply stating the fact that, rightly or wrongly, that particular task tempted me ; in fact I may say it was a case of passion. And if anyone is curious to examine the result, bared though it be of its musical vesture, I would ask that person to start by placing himself at that point of view.

TWO COMEDIES FOR MUSIC

'Soldier or sailor, when there's a man's work to be done,
Give 'em to me before anyone!' (p. 215).

THE BOATSWAIN'S MATE

Comedy in One Act and Two Parts
after W. W. Jacobs' Story of that Name

Dramatised for Music and Composed
by
ETHEL SMYTH

PERSONAGES

HARRY BENN, *ex-Boatswain* . . . (*Tenor*)
NED TRAVERS, *ex-Soldier* . . . (*Baritone*)
MRS. WATERS, *landlady of 'The Beehive'* . (*Soprano*)
MARY ANN, *a servant girl* (*Burlesque Actress: need not sing*)
A POLICEMAN . . . . . (*Bass*)

AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS
TWO CATS (*behind the scenes*)

Place—England Time—20th Century

N.B.—The Opera may be played either with a pause between Parts I and II, or straight through. Part I consists of dialogue and music; Part II is wholly music.

OVERTURE

PART I

[R. and L. are from the actor's point of view.]

The curtain rises on a summer's evening outside 'The Beehive,' a country inn (L. wing). Under a couple of trees are rustic tables, at one of which Benn is seated with a mug of beer before him. On a bench near the door sits Mary Ann, her bundle beside her, stolidly waiting.

Scene I

[*Dialogue*]

Benn (*humming to himself*).

When rocked on the billows,
That roughest of pillows . . .

(*He perceives that Mary Ann's eye is fixed on him, breaks off short, coughs, and takes a pull at his beer, wiping his mouth on his cuff.*)

Benn (*condescendingly*). So you're going to spend the night with your mother, are you ? . . . Well, I daresay the old lady 'll be glad to see you. . . .

Mary Ann (*loudly and snappishly*). She ain't so very old, leastways not what *you'd* call old—not if she was a man.

Benn (*as before*). What sort of age ?

Mary Ann. Your sort of age, I reckon, only men never gets old, of course.

Benn (*stiffly*). All the same, I do wonder you like to go off and leave your mistress all alone like that.

Mary Ann. *She's* all right ! Ain't got no 'usband to look after 'er, like my por mother 'as.

BENN (*sententiously*). No girl ought to speak disrespectful of her father.

MARY ANN. Decidedly such ; but 'e don't 'appen to be my father ; 'e's only my mother's second. Took 'im as a stop-gap, a neighbour said. 'Well,' says I, 'if that's a stop-gap give me an 'ole in the fence.'

BENN (*irritated*). Well, upon my word ! . . . (*Mrs. Waters comes out of the house*).

MRS. W. Here's your wages, Mary Ann (*calls after the departing Mary Ann*) and be back to work to-morrow in good time, mind. (*Exit Mary Ann.*)

SCENE II

[*Music*]

Mrs. Waters stands knitting in the doorway, eyeing Benn with impatience.

BENN. As I was saying when the girl came in, I know what I want when I see it.

MRS. W. And so do I.

BENN. My feelings never change !

MRS. W. Nor mine. (*Pause.*)

BENN. I'd have thought that a man about the place, just to do the odd jobs . . .

MRS. W. I can get them done without marrying again—and cheaper, too, in the end ! (*Pause.*)

BENN. Yet surely the life is rather lonely ?

MRS. W. Not at all ! There's nobody's beer has a name like mine ; I get as much company as I want . . . sometimes more !

BENN. Well, all I say is, I know what I want when I see it, and hope blooms eternal in my heart.

MRS. W. More's the pity ! (*Aside*) Was there ever anything more astonishing than the quiet conceit of some people I know ?

[*Dialogue*]

Mrs. W. It's a strange thing, Mr. Benn, but you always ask me to marry you after the third glass.

Benn. It's to get my courage up ; next time I'll do it before I've had a drop. That'll prove to you I'm in earnest.

Mrs. W. It don't matter whether you're in earnest or whether you aren't. *I'm not.*

Benn (*smirks*). You mean in refusing me ?

Mrs. W. I never in all my life met anything to equal your impudence ! (*Glancing at watch*) Bless me ! I've got to run down to the village about a money order, and the office'll close in ten minutes. (*Runs into the house.*)

Benn (*to himself*). Now if there's one situation in which I can be trusted to do myself justice, it's a stroll across the medders with a lady friend ! (*Re-enter Mrs. Waters putting on a sunbonnet.*)

Mrs. W. . . . and I was going to say, if any customers come while I'm gone perhaps you'll serve them. (*Exit in direction of field path.*)

Benn (*in an agonised voice*). Mrs. Waters ! (*She turns round, surprised.*) Mrs. Waters, you'll excuse me for mentioning it, but . . . you can't have been of your present mind always,—not when the late lamented asked you the question !

Mrs. W. (*darkly*). Once bitten, twice shy ! I'll be back directly. (*Exit Mrs. Waters rapidly.*)

Scene III

[*Music*]

Benn (*mournfully*). O, what a cruel word to utter ! . . . Once bitten, twice shy ! . . . (*He drops into a chair and stares into vacancy.*)

SONG

When rocked on the billows, that roughest of pillows,
Fed up with the joys of a wandering life,
By dreams I was haunted, by visions enchanted
Of piling up dollars and choosing a wife.

As one who has paid his respects to the ladies
I thought to have carried it through with dispatch.
She knows I have money—then isn't it funny
That nothing will make her come up to the scratch ?

I wonder why ?
Perhaps she's shy,
And yet she will slam down a pot with a look in her eye,
Not unkind,
But a look you find
In people of masterful nature who know their own mind. . . .

Those soft little creatures with pert little features
Who flatter and coax are the sort I prefer ;
But faster and faster I rush to disaster,
The slave and the sport of a woman like her !

. . . . . .

(*In deepest depression*)

Why do I do it ?—I know I shall rue it !
' Ding dong bell—Pussy's in the well.
Who'll pull her out ? '—Perhaps a boy scout !
Cold and dank, down she sank . . . !
There she lies ! . . . nobody cries. . . . !

. . . .

(*He suddenly stares upward, as if he heard voices in the air.*)

And yet, while blossoming hopes may droop and perish
A gentle voice on the breeze I hear, and it says to me :
' Without a husband to love, obey, and cherish,
A woman's just like ivy without a tree ! '

She'll run along the ground,
But she'll soon turn round
And look for a tree, or may be a post—
And up it she will climb
In a very short time,
And cling on tight
To the tree's delight,
For without a man a woman is lost !

Then stick it, Harry Benn,
For you can't tell when
The wind may change and the tide be your friend !
You're not too old,
And a sailor bold
Who won't take no
For an answer, so
Hang it all, you're bound to win in the end !

Scene IV

[*Dialogue*]

Benn struts about in a self-satisfied manner ; Travers enters unobserved by Benn and walks up the steps of the house.

Travers. Well, old cock, if stamping about and swearing 'll do it I make no doubt you *will* win in the end. (*Raps on open door.*) Hullo ! no one in ! That's queer !

Benn (*rather abashed*). I can give you anything you like to call for.

Travers (*aside*). The landlord, by Jove ! (*Aloud*) Good evening, sir. Two four ale, if you please, and out here, if it's the same to you.

Benn. Right you are ! (*Goes into house.*)

Travers (*turns out his pockets*). Fourpence all told ! Well, here goes half of my capital . . . a drink's a drink

anyway. (*He whistles cheerfully. Benn emerges with two mugs and watches him as he drinks the beer.*)

BENN (*aside*). The very man I've been looking for, I do believe ! (*Aloud*) Khaki 'ero, ain't you ?

TRAVERS. Was ; now I'm my own commander-in-chief. (*Takes out his pipe and fills it.*) Nice little place of yours, this. (*Benn slightly at a loss.*) 'Tis yours, ain't it ?

BENN. Well, not exactly ; leastways not yet. It belongs to a lady wot left me in charge, she being gone down to the village, and me a great friend.

TRAVERS (*winks*). A lady wot you've got your eye on, so to speak ? Well, you're in the right. It's a nice little place, tho' quiet. (*He smokes.*) Any opening in these parts for a handy fellow who has no objection to work . . . in reason ?

BENN. I can't think of anything at this moment, but if you're in no hurry call in here to-morrow, and I daresay you'll find there's a job going. (*Confidentially*) I ain't master here yet, but my word goes for something in that quarter, and I like a soldier—always did. Have another glass ! (*He fills up Travers' mug.*)

TRAVERS. Here's to her good health, and when's it coming off ?

BENN (*sighing*). Ah ! that's the trouble !

TRAVERS. Won't name the day ?

BENN. Worse than that.

TRAVERS. She ain't refused you, has she ?

BENN. Five times in the last fortnight.

TRAVERS (*laughs*). Stick to it, mate, you'll wear her down yet !

BENN. That's what I count on. I lay back a good bit o' money, too, when I was at sea ; but, bless you, she don't seem to care about that.

TRAVERS (*surprised*). You don't say so !

BENN. I keeps on telling her she's a lone widder,

and 'The Beehive' a lonely place. Why, the nearest house is half a mile off!

TRAVERS. Silly place for a pub!

BENN. 'You wants a man to protect you,' I says, but she only laughs. Then again I'm a small man—small but stiff—and she likes tall men.

TRAVERS (*stroking his moustache*). Most of 'em do. Why, one day at Ramsgate, when I was in the army . . . Lord, shall I ever forget it . . . !

[*Music*]

SONG

A friend and I were on the pier
  Listening to the band O,
When two young ladies smart as paint
  Came strolling down the strand O.

Says I to him: 'Here's luck indeed!
  I'll conduct the tall one,
And as for you, young five foot two,
  Go up and claim the small one!'

We raised our hats and soon paired off
  Just as I had planned it,
When Tom's young lady pulls up short,
  Says she, 'Blowed if I stand it!

'Why should we pair like blooming dolls
  Sorted out for prizes,
Or like the beasts in Noah's Ark,
  Who tramped along in sizes?'

[BENN (*interrupting*). I say old man, 'old on one mo'!]

TRAVERS (*continuing*).

'I can't afford to drag around
Undersized abortions
That maypole girls will pick for choice
As foil to their proportions.
(*Benn sits down in despair.*)
'So, Mary Jane' (this to her friend),
'Now the time has come, dear,
To hand your soldier man to me
And take on Hop o' my Thumb here!'

She grabs my arm: says Mary Jane,
Calmly and sedately,
'We'd best not tear this man in half!'
And walks off slow and stately.
(*Travers roars with laughter.*)

[*Dialogue*]

BENN (*ironically*). If you've quite done them interesting reminiscences, old chap, I was going to say, now I come to think of it I believe I can put you in the way of a job myself—a job as 'll suit a man of your cut down to the ground. (*Impressively*) 'Ow'd you like to earn a quid in ten minutes?

TRAVERS. How'd a dog fancy a sheep's head! What sort of job is it?

BENN. Wait a minute. . . . (*Confidentially*) Never bin in trouble, 'av' yer?

TRAVERS (*banging the table furiously*). What the devil d'you mean?

BENN (*soothingly*). Now don't go flying out like that, mate; I 'ad my reasons for that remark, good reasons they was too.

TRAVERS (*shouldering his bundle and moving off*). Damn you and your reasons!

BENN (*holding him back*). Look 'ere ; when I tell you I offer you that thick 'un to do a bit of burgling, you'll see how necessary it is for me to be certain of your honesty.

TRAVERS. Burgling ? Honesty ? Are you drunk, or am I ?

BENN. Meaning for you to *pretend* to be a burglar.

TRAVERS. We're both drunk, that's what it is !

BENN. It's an idea that's been in my 'ead for ever so long, only I was looking for the right man to 'elp carry it out. What I want to do is, kill two birds with one stone—prove to her that she does want to be protected and that I'm the best man to protect her. (*Holds out his arm.*) Feel that !

TRAVERS (*feeling Benn's biceps*). Like a lump o' wood !

BENN. You see how she'll go out trustful and confidin' and leave me to guard the place. My opinion is that she loves me without knowing it. (*He smiles fatuously.*)

TRAVERS. They often do.

BENN. Consequently, I don't want her to be disappointed.

TRAVERS. It does you credit.

BENN. Now if you do what I want you to to-night, and it comes off all right—damme, I'll make it two quid !

TRAVERS. Go on, Vanderbilt ! I'm listening.

BENN. You meet me 'ere in this spot at about two o'clock in the morning, and I'll put you through a winder I knows of. You goes upstairs and alarms her, and she screams for help. I'm watching the house—faithful like—and 'ears 'er scream. I dashes in at the winder and knocks you down and rescues her. D'ye see ?

TRAVERS (*coldly*). I hear.

BENN. She clings to me in her gratitood, and proud of my strength and pluck, she marries me.

[*Music*]

DUET

TRAVERS. That's the plan, is it ?

BENN. And a fine plan it is too !

TRAVERS (*methodically*). You knock me down . . .

BENN. Frightened and pale she clings to me . . .

TRAVERS. I get a black eye, but no matter . . .

BENN. And she in her gratitood marries me . . .

TRAVERS (*ironically*). Proud of your strength, proud of your pluck, 'Here,' says she, 'is my heart and hand' . . .

BENN. Then I put up the banns . . .

TRAVERS. And *I* get a five years' honeymoon !

BENN. Not a bit of it ! You up and escape !

TRAVERS. Suppose I'm caught ?

BENN. Why, who's to catch you ? She's alone in the house.

TRAVERS. But what about the neighbours ? Are they deaf, or cripples, or what ?—for no doubt she'll start to scream like mad.

BENN. But there's not a soul within half a mile to hear her !

TRAVERS. Is that so ?

BENN. It is so ! You run away as fast as ever you can . . . and I let you run.

TRAVERS. Won't it look queer, your letting me run ?

BENN (*fatuously*). Why, no, because frightened and pale she clings to me !

TRAVERS. I get a black eye . . .

BENN. *And two quid* . . .

TRAVERS. I know, that's all very fine ; but then . . . comes my five years' honeymoon ! (*Gets up.*) Time I was toddling ! So long !

BENN (*astonished*). What ! you won't do it ?

TRAVERS (*emphatically*). I'm hanged if I do ! Accidents may happen, and where should I be then ?

BENN. I'd down and clear you.

TRAVERS. You might—but then again you mightn't. (*Moves off.*)

BENN (*eagerly*). Stop, I'll make it three quid ; I've taken a fancy to you—you're just the man for the job !

TRAVERS. Thankee ! So long ! (*Goes : Benn hauls him back again.*)

BENN. Look here, you shall have it in black and white, all fair and square. Here's letters with my name and address ; cast your eye over them. (*Hands letters ; Travers examines them carefully.*)

TRAVERS (*wavering*). Well, if you give it me in writing . . .

BENN. Then, should there be an accident, it's worse for me than for you.' . . . (*He sits down at table prepared to write.*)

TRAVERS (*thoughtfully*). That's so !

BENN. And if all turns out well, as it will do, you'll have done a Christian action ! Come ! you ain't faint-hearted, are you ? (*Slyly*) Why, a sailor'd take on a job like that just for the fun of the thing ! (*Travers winces.*)

BENN (*aside*). A bull's eye !

(*Travers suddenly strides up to the table and claps Benn on the back.*)

TRAVERS. Go on, mate ! I'm your man ! You write as follows. (*He dictates, Benn repeating the words after him*)

' This to give notice that I, Harry Benn (I, Harry Benn), being of sound mind and body (sound mind and body), have told Ned Travers to pretend to be a burglar (pretend to be a burglar)—He *ain't* a burglar (*ain't* a burglar) and I shall be outside all the time (all the time). It's all above board and ship-shape (ship-shape). Signed, HARRY BENN (HARRY BENN).'

BENN. Once you're over the window-sill I'll hand you the three quid then and there.

TRAVERS. Right you are ! (*Pockets document.*)

BOTH. Soldier or sailor, when there's a man's work to be done, give 'em to me before anyone ! (*They shake hands warmly.*)

[*Dialogue*]

TRAVERS. At 2.30 sharp I'll be here.

BENN. Right-o ; and between pals here's half a crown to go on with. I may as well show you the window, though the latch wouldn't puzzle a baby. (*Starts to go round corner of the house.*) Good Lord, there she is coming back already ! I see her stepping over the stile.

TRAVERS. I'm off ! So long. (*Exit hastily : Benn seats himself and pretends to be reading the newspaper : re-enter Mrs. Waters.*)

SCENE V

[*Dialogue*]

MRS. W. Well, Mr. Benn, done any business ?

BENN. Only one pore feller, sort of tramp on the look out for a job. I said 'e might call again and that he should have my good word. . . .

MRS. W. (*sarcastically*). Very obliging of you, I'm sure !

BENN. Four mugs we 'ad in all, and 'ere's the money.

MRS. W. Well, thank you, and good-night !

BENN. It goes to my 'eart to leave you all alone and night falling fast. (*He lingers.*)

MRS. W. O dear ! Don't let's have that all over again ! The best of friends must part, and what's more I can't have you hanging about here all day. I've got my good name to think of—all the more as I'm not likely

to change it. So good-night to you. (*Exit Benn, slowly.*)

Scene VI

[*Spoken*]

Mrs. W. (*calling cat*). Pussy ! pussy ! Wherever has that cat got to ? (*She begins collecting mugs.*) The more you call her the less she comes ! but I can't blame her—I'm rather that way myself !

[*Music*]

SONG

Mrs. W. Suppose you mean to do a given thing ;
Let someone come and say it ought to be done
And all of a sudden you'd rather die than do it !

Again, you think you'd like to see a friend ;
But if the friend turns up to spend the day
You cannot imagine what madness made you suggest it !

Perhaps at times you feel a little lonely,
But Mister Wrong comes bothering you to have him ;
At once you feel like ending your days in a lighthouse !

. . . . . .

I suppose it's the contrariness of human nature !
Heigh-ho ! And yet, as the day closes in,
A day like this . . . the air so soft and kindly
And a little wind blowing
And ev'rywhere the scent of new-mown hay and flowers . . .
Then strange thoughts come stealing along
In the twilight . . . dreams and memories of long ago !
. . . What says the old song ?
'Spring-time the only pretty ring time' . . .
And yet . . .

SONG

What if I were young again, careless and gay,
What if I were young again, just for to-day ?
The hot sun in glory setting,
With gold thread the vine leaves fretting . . .
Ah ! well I know, if my heart were still young,
Where my thoughts would be now !

When the long day's work was done, night coming fast,
On the tired world would fall silence at last.
The birds in their warm nest sleeping,
The stars one by one forth peeping,
Swift like a ghost I would steal down the path
To a spot I know well !

What if one were waiting there, waiting for me ?
Overhead a ruffled pine sings like the sea, . . .
A star from the bright sky falling,
The desire of our young hearts calling . . .
Ah ! well I know that to-day e'en as then
I would cling to my dream !

Scene VII

Finale

In the distance you hear the shouting and singing of labourers coming home from work. Mrs. Waters begins collecting mugs ; exit in house. The singing is accompanied in the usual style by banjo, concertina, etc.

SONG

' O, Mary I try to forget you,
I try, but 'tis ever in vain—
Your sweet face is always before me
And fills me with longing and pain.'

(*Interruption, roars of laughter and chaff. The men enter, having obviously visited another public-house already.*)

'Last evening you smiled O so kindly
And gave me your dear 'and to 'old ;
Next morning I fly to you, darling,
And find you so cruel and cold.'

(*The men settle down and begin rapping on the tables.*)

CHORUS

THE MEN. 'Ello ! 'Ello there ! mugs all round !

ONE GROUP (*to a young fellow who is slinking off*). Now, Sammy, you be a man ! Don't give in to start with !

OTHERS. He's afraid of his intended !

ALL. 'Ello, Missus, mugs all round ! (*They rap furiously : Mrs. Waters suddenly appears in the doorway.*)

MRS. W. Now you be off ; you've had enough to drink as it is. I won't have brawling about my place.

MEN. But look 'ere, it ain't yet closing time.

MRS. W. It's closing time up here, my man. (*To the young fellow*) What ! *you*, Sammy Evans ! going to be married, too, in a week ! You ought to be ashamed ! Go home at once ! Now then all of you, be off ! . . .

MEN. But the law says . . .

MRS. W. (*decidedly*). I'm the law up here ! (*Amiably*) Come, like good fellows go home at once ! 'Good-night to you all, and sweet be your sleep.'

MEN (*sheepishly, getting up one by one*). Well, . . . p'r'aps we'd best be moving. Good-night, Mrs. Waters ! . . . (*They depart slowly, singing ; Mrs. Waters stops her ears.*)

' O come, in my arms let me 'old thee,
Content on this bosom to lie,
White 'ot flames of passion consume thee.
O, Mary, be mine or I die ! '

(*Exit men.*)

Mrs. W. Pussy, pussy, pussy . . . ! That cat won't come home to-night, and no wonder ; to hear a lot of Englishmen singing after they've had a drop is enough to discourage all the cats on all the roofs in this island ! (*She sings, imitating the men.*)

' O come, in my arms let me hold thee,
Content on this bosom to lie . . .'

As if anyone would do such a thing ! The impertinence ! (*She enters the house and closes the door with a bang.*)

CURTAIN

INTERMEZZO

N.B.—When the Opera is played without a break between the Parts, the Music of the Intermezzo may serve as Prelude to Part II.

PART II

[*All music.*]

The Scene is the interior of the kitchen of ' The Beehive ' ; a staircase runs up the back wall ; on the left side of that wall is the entrance door ; on the right, at the foot of the stairs, is a window about five feet above the level of the garden outside. Left wing, well

forward, a big cupboard; in the centre of the stage a big table. Right wing, close to footlights, a small cupboard with a hand mirror fastened on the inside of the door. Beyond that is the range, and beyond that again, on the extreme right, a door leading into the scullery. Time 2.30 *a.m. Moonlight, so that the room is not quite dark. Cat mews outside the door; then silence. Then more mewing and furious spitting. Silence again. The window goes up softly and Travers' head becomes visible.*

Scene I

Travers (*at window*). If those cats don't wake her, she must be a sound sleeper! (*Listens.*) All quiet! (*Clambering up*) Gently does it! (*Gets in.*)

Benn (*at window*). Here's the money. (*Hands it to Travers.*) How do you feel?

Travers. As if I'd been burgling all my life! Wonderful the way a square meal 'll make a man of you. (*Begins taking off his boots.*)

Benn (*nervously*). Take your time; there's no hurry . . . and don't do anything rash . . .

Travers (*aside*). Dash that bootlace, it's in a knot.

Benn. Frighten her enough, but not too much, and when I hear her scream I'll jump through the winder.

Travers. Right-o! but won't she think it funny you should be so handy?

Benn. No; it's my faithful 'eart watching over 'er every night! She won't know no better! . . . O dear, looking on is jumpy work.

Travers. Now then, forward the Light Brigade! (*Puts his boots near the stairs.*)

Benn. There's the stair, up you go! (*He disappears.*)

Scene II

Travers creeps up the stairs, making a good deal of noise; his socks need darning.

SONG

Travers.

A ricketty stair can be scaled without noise,
By giving attention to swiftness and poise;
And one of the secrets, as everyone knows,
Is hopping along on the tips of your toes.
(*He stumbles.*)

But somehow or other an amateur feels
He'd get along better if using his heels;
I'm not in the Ballet, and wish I might put
My thirteen stone ten on the flat of my foot!
(*He all but falls.*)

It's not quite so simple, this question of poise,
But up to the present I've not made a noise;
The worry and strain of it nobody knows,
I seem to have staggers and cramp in my toes!

(*A light is seen from above: Travers hurries downstairs again.*)

She's coming . . . and she's got a gun!! (*He slips into the big cupboard.*)

Scene III

Clad in petticoat and shawl, her hair down and her bare feet in slippers, Mrs. Waters appears coming downstairs, in one hand a light, in the other a gun. She deposits the light on the table.

Mrs. W. I thought I heard a noise, but it must have been my fancy, or perhaps it was the cat. (*Suddenly puts her shoulder to cupboard and turns key.*) I've got you!

If you try to break out I'll shoot ! Keep still now, or I'll fire !

TRAVERS. Don't fire ! it's all right,—right as rain ! I'll not move.

MRS. W. You'd better not ; mind, I've a gun, and it's pointing straight at you !

TRAVERS (*earnestly*). Point it downwards, there's a good girl, and take your pretty little fingers off the trigger !

MRS. W. Don't you try to break out ! I'm going to fire one barrel out of the window, but if you move I've got the other one for you.

TRAVERS (*horrified*). My dear girl, you'll rouse the whole place !

MRS. W. Just what I want to do. (*Raises gun.*)

TRAVERS. Stop ! Hear me before you let off that gun. I'm not a burglar at all ! It's all a joke ! . . . I'm doing it for a friend of yours, name Harry Benn.

MRS W. (*sharply*). What's that ?

TRAVERS. It's true as here I stand (*pushing paper under door*) ; here's my instructions. Read 'em, and if you'll step up to the window you'll see him in the garden.

MRS. W. (*snatches up the paper, glances at it, then runs to window and peeps out*). I *do* see him ! . . . well, of all the disgraceful things. . . . Where did you meet Mr. Benn ?

TRAVERS (*hesitatingly*). Last night we were talking over a glass. . . . (*Mrs. W.* As usual ! Go on.) And then he spoke of his loving heart . . . and ' The Beehive ' being such a lonely spot . . . and how if he was to protect you from a burglar . . .

MRS. W. (*coldly*). You needn't say more, I quite understand. (*Angrily*) You ought to be punished, the pair of you !

TRAVERS. I *am* being punished ! I'm getting the cramp in here pretty bad. (*Pause.*) What are you

going to do? You look too nice to be hard on a man, leastways as far as I can judge through this crack. . . .

MRS. W. If I let you out will you promise to do exactly as I tell you?

TRAVERS. I promise, honour bright.

(*Mrs. W. opens the cupboard. On seeing Travers she hastily deposits the gun on the table, runs across to the little cupboard, and during the following duet puts on a neat white wrapper and mob cap. Travers puts on his boots hastily and smooths his hair down.*)

DUET

MRS. W. (*aside*). O dear, if I had known he was quite a young man I'd have put on more clothes!

TRAVERS (*aside*). What on earth shall I say, for the first little glimpse of her knocked me quite flat!

MRS. W. (*aside*). Time was short, but it wouldn't have taken a moment to put up my hair!

TRAVERS (*aside*). Fancy trying to win such a glorious creature for silly old Benn!

MRS. W. (*aside*). There's something about him I like . . . and he's really a very fine man!

TRAVERS (*aside*). O Lord, what a fool I must look . . . and I wish I had mended my socks!

BOTH. O dear (*etc.*).

(*Mrs. Waters takes up the gun.*)

MRS. W. I mean to give Mr. Benn the lesson of his life! I'm going to fire off this gun and tell him I've killed you. (*Travers bursts out laughing.*) Stop that noise, he'll hear you!

TRAVERS. Wait a moment, we don't want anyone else to hear. Fire into this. (*Snatches up doormat.*)

MRS. W. Run upstairs with it; I'm going to shoot you on the upper landing. (*He does so, followed by*

Mrs. Waters. Noise of gun being let off. Mrs. Waters rushes downstairs screaming.)

Scene IV

Ensemble

Mrs. W. Help ! Murder ! (*She unbolts door.*)

Benn (*outside*). I'm coming. . . . (*He enters and endeavours to enfold her, but she eludes him.*) What is it ?

Mrs. W. Burglars ! but it's all right . . . I've shot him !

Benn (*horrified*). You've . . . shot him ?

Mrs. W. I heard someone moving, so I lit the lamp, took my gun, and down I ran . . . searched the place . . . kitchen . . . scullery ; . . . nobody !

Benn (*aside*). What a fearful tragedy !

Travers (*aside on stairs*). She's a wonder ! So calm and collected and saucy !

Mrs. W. Upstairs I ran again to look once more, and there, hiding behind a door, was a man !

Benn. What did you do ?

Mrs. W. I raised my gun like this . . .

Benn. Take care ! I shall be the next . . .

Mrs. W. (*aiming at Benn*). I took good aim like this . . .

Benn. Take care ! (*He backs away from her.*)

Mrs. W. I fired ! ! (*Benn leaps back and falls over a chair*) . . . and down he went like a stone ! (*Puts gun calmly in a corner.*)

Benn. O dear ! poor fellow !

Travers (*aside*). I've seen a funny thing or two, but nothing half so funny as the face of old Benn !

Mrs. W. (*to Benn*). You're full of pity for the burglar, but pray what about me ?

Benn (*hopefully*). Perhaps his wounds are only slight. (*Moves towards staircase.*)

MRS. W. Where are you going to? (*She bars the way.*)

BENN. To see if I can help him . . .

MRS. W. He's past help . . . I've killed him!

BENN (*staggering*). You've killed him . . . (*Mrs. W. nods*) but you can't be sure! (*Runs to stairs; Mrs. W. hauls him back by his coat tails.*)

MRS. W. You come back! there's nothing to be done, and what's more I'll have no witnesses; I won't have my house get a bad name. This thing must be kept quiet! (*Meditates.*)

BENN. But how? It can't be done!

MRS. W. It's merely a question of brains. Let me think. (*Sits on table, swinging one foot.*)

TRAVERS (*aside*). They talk about the Emerald Isle, but Ireland can't be greener than the face of old Benn!

BENN (*aside*). Am I dreaming? Will someone pinch me awake? (*He pinches himself.*)

TRIO (VALSE)

MRS. W. The first thing to do is . . . get rid of the body. I'll bury him, I think, in the garden. I've a nice bit of ground behind the potatoes; you'd better to get to work at once!

BENN. Get to work? What work? (*Aside*) She's clean off her head, and no wonder.

MRS. W. Why, digging the grave, to be sure!

BENN. I don't know as I *can* dig . . . leastways not a grave.

MRS. W. Rubbish, it's a nice soft bit of ground; and dig it deep enough, mind! Later on when I'm finished I'll plant a few cabbages on top of him. I've more than I can do with. (*Hands Benn a spade.*) Hurry up! here's the spade, and while you're digging I'll clean up the mess.

TRAVERS (*on the stairs*). Was there ever the like of her in this world? So calm and collected and saucy!

BENN. But how are you going to get . . . *it* . . . down?

MRS. W. Drag it! (*Benn stumbles towards the door, and presently lets the spade fall.*) Bless me, what nerves you men have got! I don't believe you'll be equal to planting a potato for a week . . . and the sun will be up directly! . . . You'd best go off now, and come back at midnight. You'll find me waiting (*portentously*) and everything ready. (*Exit Benn in a dazed condition. Travers comes downstairs.*)

SCENE V

Day is breaking.

TRAVERS. I wouldn't have missed that, not to be made a Field Marshal!

MRS. W. (*at window*). Just look at him, staring about, and his knees knocking. . . . You needn't push up so close, he'll see you. Take care, he's coming up to the window. (*Travers flattens himself against wall; she arranges curtain to hide him.*)

BENN (*outside, quaveringly*). Mrs. Waters!

MRS. W. Well, what now? (*Benn's head appears at window.*)

BENN. I keep on seeing it everywhere! Fancy if something was to come creeping up behind you and catch hold of you . . . (*Travers does so; Mrs. W. turns sharply and boxes his ear.*)

MRS. W. (*irritably*). Don't carry on like a Jack-in-the-Box, Mr. Benn! You're enough to give one the jumps! Pull yourself together and go home to bed, do. (*She raps down the window.*)

(*Pause; she turns angrily on Travers.*)

MRS. W. How dare you take liberties with me ?

TRAVERS (*humbly*). He put it into my head ; I never should have thought of such a thing myself ! I'm the quietest, best-behaved fellow going.

MRS. W. So I should have said by what I've seen to-night ! . . . Look here, this joke's gone far enough. I do believe his wits are leaving him, and he's none to spare ! I'll just run after him and ease his mind. (*She opens door, then re-closes it deliberately.*) Well, of all the mean tricks ! He's coming back with a policeman !

TRAVERS (*whistles*). That's a nasty one !

MRS. W. (*pointing to scullery*). Go in there and keep as still as a mouse.

TRAVERS. What shall you say ?

MRS. W. You listen ! I'm not often at a loss.

(*Travers slips into the scullery.*)

SCENE VI

After knocking, enter policeman with Benn, who is hatless and pale.

MRS. W. Well, I'm sure ! What do you two want at this hour of the morning ?

BENN (*in an outburst*). I told him as how it was done in innocence and self-defence. . . . O dear ! (*Groans.*)

POLICEMAN (*to Mrs. W.*). It's my duty to warn you that everything you say will be used in evidence against you.

MRS. W. (*flippantly*). Well then of course I shan't say anything at all !

POLICEMAN (*taking out notebook*). Outside your house I met this man 'ere, all white and trembling, and his 'air as you see it. And when he see me he fetched an awful cry ; ' Take me, constable,' says he, ' as soon now as

later, for if there's been murder done at " The Beehive " I am the guilty cause.' Them was his very words.

BENN (*as before*). O, if only you'd known it you never was in danger at all ! the man wouldn't have hurt a fly; but how could you tell ? . . . (*His voice dies away.*)

POLICEMAN. You 'ear 'im ? Now I ask you, Mrs. Waters, what's up ?

(*Mrs. Waters has throughout ignored the policeman and watched Benn with apparent concern.*)

MRS. W. (*kindly*). Now, Mr. Benn, when you sit in the bar, talking nonsense by the hour and calling for glass after glass, I've often enough warned you ; and now it has come to this ! (*Shakes her head.*)

BENN (*as before*). O that I should have lived to bring this trouble on the head I cherish !

MRS. W. (*sharply*). You'll bring something on your own head, something hard with knots in it, if you don't give over ! (*To policeman.*) A man murdered here ? Why, there's not been a soul near the place (*crash of crockery in the scullery*) . . . except a fellow who called in just now asking for a job, and by what I hear he's doing it nicely ! (*Looking into scullery.*) Is that what you call plumbing and gasfitting ? (*Travers emerges sheepishly.*)

BENN (*falling against policeman*). The very man !

MRS. W. (*coolly*). Who else should it be ? (*To Travers.*) Is this the man who told you his good word was more than enough to get you a job here ?

TRAVERS. That's him !

MRS. W. (*to Benn*). Then why all this fuss ?

QUARTET

BENN.

It must have been the drink, . . . or love !
There ain't much difference between 'em !

THE THREE MEN (*with feeling*).

Drink or love !
There ain't much difference between 'em !
First one glass—then another glass—
And before you know where you are
Your head's all muzzy !
First one look—then another look—
And before you know where you are
Your heart's all thumpy !

MRS. W. (*aside*).

O, these men ! they're all alike ;
Soldier, sailor, or policeman,
There's not much difference between 'em !

POLICEMAN (*doubtfully*). I've got that down.

MRS. W. (*to policeman*). Well, then, take *this* down ! How dare you come bursting into other people's houses, talking of murder and such like on the word of a man who doesn't know when to pull up ? I swear I'll report you !

POLICEMAN. Where's that bleeding corpse ?

BENN (*to policeman*). It was all a mistake ; we'd better go.

TRAVERS (*to policeman*). I can't be a corpse to oblige a policeman.

POLICEMAN (*to Mrs. Waters, solemnly*). Are you prepared to swear there ain't no corpse on these premises ?

MRS. W. Not at present, but soon there'll be two if you don't clear out, both of you, quicker than you came ; and don't you bully me, for I won't stand it.

POLICEMAN. This ain't cleared up what I call satisfactory.

MRS. W. O, I've no patience ! (*Pushes out Benn and policeman.*)

Scene VII

Mrs. W. There ! that's done. I hope I'm going to have a little peace at last. The men are gone crazy ! (*She lights a spirit lamp and begins making tea, etc.*)

Travers. Talk about the seven wonders of the world . . . or are there eight of them ? Anyway, you beat the whole lot.

Mrs. W. (*dryly*). Thank you kindly ! but when the coast is clear off you go, Mr. Ned Travers !

Travers (*in a subdued manner*). Isn't there any little job I could do for you while I'm waiting . . . just to make amends ?

Mrs. W. The boiler tap's rather stiff ; you can see to that if you like. (*She goes to cupboard : Travers kneels down by the tap.*)

Travers. Fancy your little hands dragging away at a thing like this !

Mrs. W. (*aside*). There's a nice bit of bacon in the larder . . . and the jam. They tell me the army lives upon jam, but they don't get my home-made gooseberry, or anything like it ! (*She fetches things out of cupboard and lays the table.*)

Travers. That's better ! Now it'll turn to a woman's hand . . . as easy as a man will ! (*He gets up.*)

Mrs. W. (*indifferently*). You may as well have a bit of breakfast before you go. (*They sit down.*)

(*Pause.*)

Mrs. W. Why don't you get some regular work ?

Travers. Easier said than done ! But mind, I'm no beggar ; such as it is, I pay my way. By-the-by, I suppose I haven't earned the money Benn gave me !

Mrs. W. Hand it over to me, and when I'm tired of the joke I'll let him have it.

TRAVERS (*hands her the money*). Soft hands you've got! No wonder Benn was desperate; I daresay I'd have done the same in his place. . . . (*Pause.*)

MRS. W. But a man like you can surely find work?

TRAVERS. There's only one job I'm fit for now that I'm too old for the army . . .

MRS. W. Really? And what job may that be?

TRAVERS. Landlord of a little pub like this. (*Mrs. Waters stares, then gets up with dignity.*)

MRS. W. Good-morning!

TRAVERS. I'm a home-like chap and as strong as a horse . . .

MRS. W. No doubt you are; good-morning!

TRAVERS. I never asked a girl to have me yet, for I never met one I wanted till now . . .

MRS. W. Indeed? (*Opens door.*) Good-morning!

TRAVERS. All right, I'm going . . . no offence was meant. All the same I ask your pardon—and I won't come back again . . . (*movement on the part of Mrs. Waters*) yet I *would* like to hear how Benn takes the joke!

MRS. W. (*after a pause*). If you're passing this way and chance to look in, I'll tell you.

TRAVERS (*joyfully*). I'll look in this day week! (*At the door*) That would be the best joke of all . . .

MRS. W. What would?

TRAVERS. For him to come round one evening and find me landlord. . . . Think it over!

MRS. W. (*gently*). I'll think it over when you're gone . . . now go!

TRAVERS. . . . If I should be passing this evening?

MRS. W. (*gaily*). This is a licensed house, free to all!

TRAVERS. Are you sure you wouldn't mind?

MRS. W. No . . . I shouldn't mind! (*They shake hands and linger over it.*)

DUET

TRAVERS.

When the sun is setting
And the shadows growing long
It's a pleasant time to walk and talk
With a friend!

MRS. W.

In the woods the paths
Are strips of velvet, fairy green,
Edged with silver where a tiny brook
Gleams up through the ferns!

TRAVERS.

And a mass of tiny flowers bright as jewels!
. . . Are you sure you wouldn't mind?

MRS. W.

O no! I wouldn't mind!

BOTH.

When the sun is setting (*etc.*)
Good-bye then, till this evening!

(*Exit Travers.*)

SCENE VIII

FINALE

Mrs. Waters runs to the little cupboard, takes down the hand-glass and examines herself with evident satisfaction. She starts suddenly.

MRS. W. A wrinkle! but only a little one—and after all one isn't a girl, not in years at least! (*Thoughtfully*) 'Spring-time, the only pretty ring time' . . .

(*A pause: suddenly she laughs joyously and tosses her head.*)

Who cares what a silly old song says!
Summer, summer's the time for me!
Spring has a bright smiling face,
And a cruel heart to deceive . . .
Summer, summer's the time for love!

Ah ! the long hot days, the still cool nights,
Beauty and fullness all around you,
In the starry sky, on the teeming earth . . .
Bending toward you laden branches,
The ripe fruit yours for the plucking—— !
Summer, summer's the time for love !

For the world is still young in the summer,
And laughs and sings like the young !
Hot is the heart of summer,
And her pulses are dancing and throbbing for joy
Like the waves that dance to the sun,
Like the stars that dance to the night,——
Summer, summer's the time for love !

(*The room is suddenly flooded with sunshine. Mrs. Waters runs to the window, opens it, and then begins dancing, holding the mirror high above her face. The door opens and Mary Ann appears, unnoticed, with her bundle ; she stares in blank astonishment.*)

MARY ANN (*aside*). I never did ! Oo'd 'a' thought it ? . . . Well, if the missus can kick 'er 'eels so can I.

(*She begins to dance awkwardly in the background. Mrs. Waters, pirouetting round, suddenly sees her and stops dead, breathless, but quick to recover herself.*)

MRS. W. (*with dignity*). Mary Ann ! What are you thinking of ? Get to your work at once !

(*She gathers her wrapper round her and runs upstairs, shaking her fist at Travers, who is looking in at the window, grinning. Mary Ann goes down on her knees on the hearth, with a still wider grin.*)

CURTAIN

To my own Branch, the Army.

ENTENTE CORDIALE

A post-war Comedy in One Act
(founded on fact).

Written and Composed by ETHEL SMYTH
(Bengal Military Orphan)

PERSONAGES

ERB 'IGGINS, *Mess Corporal, a popular personality* (*Tenor*)
PRIVATE BILL BAYLIS, *his clever friend* . (*Baritone*)
GRUMMINS, *Batman, a 'dug-out'* . . (*Bass*)
CHARLES ARCOT, *Interpreter* . . . (*Bass*)
EMMA 'IGGINS, *Erb's Wife* . . (*Mezzo Soprano*)
JEANNE ARCOT, *Charles's Wife* . (*Light Soprano*)
THE ADJUTANT, A TELEPHONE CLERK . . (*non-singing parts*)

Soldiers belonging to the 10th London Bridge Regiment; their Wives; Market Men and Women.

N.B.—*The Routine and Cavalry Field Calls introduced are as follows: In the* OVERTURE: *Men's Meal, 1st and 2nd Call. In* 'DIRECTIONS': *Boot and Saddle; As you Were; Retreat; Gallop; Charge; Officers' Dinner.*

SCENE.—The action takes place in 1919 *on the outskirts of a small town in N. France not far from the coast, near which a battalion of an English regiment is encamped, awaiting transfer to England.*

OVERTURE

Scene I

[R. and L. are from the actor's point of view.]

[*Dialogue*]

The curtain rises on a small 'Place' across the back of which passes a road leading L. to the heart of the town and R. to the camp. On the road is a tobacco shop with the usual sign (a huge red cigar) and a notice board: 'Tabac Régie'; and another house with a notice board, 'Notaire Publique.'

In the foreground L. is a big tree with a seat built round its stem, on which Erb 'Iggins is seated smoking. Beside him is a big provision basket and on his back a rucksack. It is early morning.

The door of the tobacconist's shop opens and Bill Baylis bounces out in a fury. A malevolent face peers after him with a grin; the bolts are then loudly driven home and a blind is drawn down.

Bill. Says 'e won't give me credit! . . . Do you hear, Erb . . . *won't—give—me—credit!* Says 'e doesn't know me! Why, 'e knows me as well as 'e knows the Colonel!

Erb. Ah! that's the trouble, I expect! . . . 'E *do* know yer!

Bill. The trouble is that 'e's an old blackguard as judges others by himself!

Erb. Ah! but 'e can be very pleasant when 'e likes —specially when 'e's a bit squiffy. (*Mimicking*) 'I not take to ze drink,' 'e says to me one day—'Ze drink 'e take to me! 'e *like* me! 'e *agree* with me!'

Bill. . . . And there's a new lot of fags come in, too;

I saw the parcel under the counter. Good Lord, if the chaps got word of it! (*Pause.*) You ain't got a few francs on yer, Erb, 'av yer?

ERB (*shaking his head*). Only the money for the Mess. . . .

BILL (*hesitatingly*). Well, don't you think you could . . . ?

ERB (*firmly*). No! . . . I *don't* think I could . . .

BILL. All right! I'm off to raise the wind somehow . . . it'll be too late presently.

ERB (*alarmed*). For Gawd's sake, Bill, don't leave me to tackle them old market-women by myself! I give you my word, when they start jabberin' and screamin' all together, I lose my head and could cry like a child. How you can make head or tail of their lingo beats me.

BILL. You could do it yourself if you didn't spend half the day kickin' yourself silly at football. French is a fine langwidge.

ERB. Maybe it is, but English is good enough for me.

BILL. There's many considers French a finer langwidge than English.

ERB. What d'you mean, a finer langwidge?

BILL. Well—more classical like.

ERB. Judging by the way them old women talk, it ain't a langwidge *I* fancy; sounds like peacocks in a fit, most of it. And look at the way they repeat themselves—why (*points to shop*) that's the third tobacconist in this village as is named Reggie!

BILL (*sententiously*). *All* the tobacconists in France is named Reggie, the reason being that all the tobakker in the country belongs to the Guv'ment.

ERB. But I don't see why that makes 'em all be called Reggie.

BILL. They're all called Reggie because the President as passed that law was named Reginald.

Scene II

Enter (R.) the Adjutant reading a 'phone message. He is very spick and span, self-important, and fussy. With him Grummins, obviously a 'dug-out,' rather stout and elderly. The soldiers salute.

Adj. (*reading*). A party of women arriving here any moment, and the clerk *thinks* it's the Waacs? Why doesn't he *know*?

Grummins. 'Phone broke down, sir, just while the message was a-coming through, and as them Waacs was expected to pass through 'ere to-day or to-morrow . . .

Adj. Ah, yes, of course! Higgins, go to the canteen and tell them to get everything ready as usual; lots of hot water and tea and the usual thing.

Erb. Please, sir, it's market day, and I 'av the provisions to see to. The women comes into market just about this time.

Adj. Well, *you* go, Baylis. (*Baylis salutes and exit.*) And that reminds me; Higgins, the Mess Sergeant has been complaining about muddles and irregularities in the accounts. He says these women are for ever coming along with bills for things you say were paid for on the nail. (*Discreet joy of Grummins.*)

Erb (*injured*). So they is, sir. I always pays for everything on the nail, but what with their talking so fast and me not 'aving quite mastered the language . . .

Adj. 'Quite mastered the language,' indeed! Why, any fool ought to be able to pick up enough of it to buy provisions! It's a strange thing, but here are you fellows dumped down here for months on end, and I'm hanged if any of you can string six words together.

ERB. Beg pardon, sir, but speakin' for myself, I've been at special pains to learn up a lot of sentences I thought 'd come in useful.

ADJ. Well, say some of them ! (*Silence.*) Are any of them about buying things for the Mess ?

ERB (*uncomfortably*). Not exactly, sir.

ADJ. What *are* they about then ?

ERB (*as before*). Please, sir, I'd rather not say.

(*Grummins smothers a laugh.*)

ADJ. Grummins, you might go to the station and tell the transport officer to send the women up to the canteen as soon as they arrive. (*Exit Grummins : the Adjutant turns to Erb.*) Here's a book of receipts ; whatever you buy you're to put the date *here*, the price *here*, sign *here*, and make the woman sign *here*. Do you understand ?

ERB (*taking the chits*). Yessir ; but suppose she can't write ? These foreigners is very ignorant as a rule.

ADJ. Nonsense ! she can make a mark, anyhow. And now, look here. I don't choose to go into matters that are not my business, but you must remember we are in a foreign country, and *can't exercise too much tact.* A lot of things that are of no consequence at home may easily make trouble *here* . . . disturb the *Entente Cordiale* as we call it, and so on. In fact . . . (*very pointedly*) no irregularities of any kind, do you understand ? . . . or you may find yourself in Queer Street !

(*Exit Adjutant* (*L.*).)

SCENE III

ERB. O dear, O dear ! If there's one word in the 'ole language I do 'ate, it's the word *irregularities* !

SONG : ' IRREGULARITIES '

(1)

You plods along as well as you can,
And does your duty like a man
Out here.
A soldier's life ain't always pleasant—
All bully beef and no roast pheasant,
O dear !

And if you start a rag with the boys,
And 'appen to make a bit of a noise—
Bark like a dog, and sing and shout,
And some gets throwing the boots about—
Then bang ! bang ! 'oo's at the door ?
It's the Sergeant-Major's fist, of course,
And you always know he's a little bit cross
When you 'ear 'im driving 'is feet through the floor.

' *Old . . . yer . . . row* ' (says 'e)
' They can 'ear you over at the Sergeant's classes !
Strange . . . thing . . . 'ow ' (says 'e)
' Grown men will be'ave like mad jackasses ! '

As for 'is manner and voice,
They ain't as you might say tame,
But 'is language is wonderful choice,
And the moral is always the same ;

' No irregularities !
And 'oo's bin upsetting of the ink ?
Why it's running like a river,
And there's some o' you'll shiver
When you find yourselves in clink ! '
Why ! without irregularities
Lor lummy ! wouldn't life be flat !
If you can't have fun with it
Better 'av done with it,
Better go out like that ! (*Blows out a match.*)

(2)

This life we lead has many a charm ;
No surprise or sudden alarm
Out here !
But still it ain't a life as I like ;
Such a dull 'ole I never did strike,
O dear !

And if you should see two pretty gurls
Up at a winder combing their curls,
' Good day ! ' says you, in the parlezvoo,
And kiss your 'and—as, of course, you do
Then, O lor ! you look round,
And, of course, there's an orficer passing by,
And 'e fixes you with 'is cold grey eye,
And don't you wish you could sink through the ground !

Not—one—word 'e'll say,
But you jolly well know 'e's out for slaughter ;
' '*Av—you—'eard* ' ('e'll say)
' Of men be'aving as they didn't oughter ? '

Though we're so terrible stern
They can't put a lock on your door,
But the screw'll be given an extra turn
With moral as before ;

What the Army's comin' to
I'd really be afraid to guess,
With a married man a winkin'
And a smilin' and a blinkin'
At a gurl in a blue print dress !
Why, without irregularities
Lor lummy ! wouldn't life be flat !
If you can't 'av fun with it
Better 'av done with it,
Better go out like that ! (*Blows out match as before.*)

Scene IV

[*Dialogue*]

Erb. And now for the treat of the week . . . wrangling with a pack of old women 'oo run up the prices while you wait. 'Ow to carry on without Bill *I* dunno ! . . . (*Enter R. Jeanne with a chicken and two rabbits ; she is very pretty, with a coquettish white cap on her head.*) 'Ello ! 'ere's one of 'em ! pretty girl, too ! Not a regular old Macbeth witch like most of 'em, but one 'oo, as you might say, will p'r'aps respond to treatment ! (*Approaches Jeanne.*) Er . . . er . . . combieng le pool, madam ?

Jeanne. Bonjour, monsieur ! . . . I spik Engleesh ! my 'usband was waitaire in ze City five year ! 'e teach me spik Engleesh a little !

Erb. There now ! as soon as I see you coming I says to myself : ' Erb, you're in luck ! ' I was askin', what price that fowl ?

Jeanne. Ze price . . . *for you* . . . (*holds up eight fingers*) eight franc !

Erb. Eight francs ? Why, madam, you must be jokin' ! Too dear ! trop cher ! . . . like you, madam !

Jeanne. No, no, ver chip ! feel 'is fat !

Erb (*aside*). Well, I 'av met with skinnier birds in my time, and after all it's the orficers 'as to pay ! (*Aloud*) I can't bargain with such a pretty girl, madam, so 'ere you are ! (*counts out notes*) ung, doux, trois, catter, sank, cease, set, and wheet—which rhymes with sweet ! (*He stows away the bird under his arm.*) And now (*producing the chits*) will you just write your name 'ere ?

Jeanne (*sharply*). What for I write my name ?

Erb. It's just a receipt, madam.

Jeanne. Ah ! . . . ça *non* ! No ! (*shakes her head*)

I not write *nozing* ! (*She tries to take fowl back : slight struggle : re-enter Bill.*)

Bill. Ello ! What's this little game ? international tug-o'-war ? (*Erb lets go the fowl.*)

Erb. It's the Adjutant's latest ! I've got to take a receipt for every blessed thing, but she won't sign. Did you ever see anything like 'em for caution and suspiciousness ! If that kid won't sign, I ask you, what'll the old women be like ? (*He takes back the money.*)

Bill. I've got it ! We'll go to that 'ere Notaire Publeek and make 'im write out why we want 'em to sign, and that it's orficer's orders ! (*To Jeanne, who is going*) Madam ! non partay ! . . . pool *par* trop cher ! say . . . ker. . . .

Erb. You'll break somethin' in a minute, Bill, and there's no occasion for it ; she speaks English as well as you and me !

Jeanne. My 'usband inter*pret* for ze Engleesh Army, and 'e say, 'you . . . nevare . . . write . . . *nozing* ! Spik ? Yes ! but r-r-rite ? No ! . . . no ! nevare ! '

Erb (*to Bill*). The old man's got 'is 'ead screwed on the right way ! no doubt of that !

Bill. Madam ! wait 'ere ! restez-ici-la ! (*Points to the ground.*) We go to Notaire Publeek there, and 'e'll write out what we want and why we want it. You wait 'ere !

Erb. Don't go away, madam ! I've taken a particular fancy to that bird . . . and to you, too ! Just wait 'ere for five minutes . . . to please me . . . Do, now ! (*Impressively*) *Par . . . trop . . . cher ! Bel pool !* Notaire expleekay everything !

Jeanne (*aside*). Dieu ! qu'il est drôle ! (*Aloud*) Good ! Good ! I not run away ! I go fetch my little table only, but I come back in five . . . three minutes !

TRIO : 'NOTHING IN WRITING'

ERB. O, madam, I wish I was able
To say how I long for that bird !
JEANNE. I go fetch my nice little table ;
I surely come back, on my word !

ERB. The Notary Public'll tell you
Why the chit has got to be signed ;
Surely, madam, you're far too kind
To think that a soldier 'ld sell you !

BILL (*impressively*). Par trop cher ! Tray bell pool !

JEANNE. Before 'e go off to ze fighting
Mon mari 'e say in my ear :
' *Spik* whatever you like, my dear,
But never give nozing in *r-r-riting* ! '

BILL. She *must* give us something in writing !
ERB. Just one word in writing !
JEANNE. No ! *nozing* !

(*Jeanne runs off L. ; Bill and Erb knock and are admitted into the Notary's house.*)

SCENE V

[*Dialogue*]

Enter Grummins from L.

GRUMMINS. They say bad news travels fast, but I never knew a worse bit of news travel faster than this little surprise visit ! Why, 'arf the camp's down at the station already ! (*The Telephone Clerk, a very young man, rushes from R. to L. across the stage ; Grummins holds out both arms and stops him.*) (*Facetiously*) 'Ello, telephones, where are you runnin' to ? *You* ain't a married man, I 'ope !

CLERK. What d'yer mean ?

GRUMMINS (*bitterly*). It ain't the Waacs at all as they was ringing you up about ; it's a pack of soldiers' wives from 'ome . . . just arrived ! Did you ever 'ear of such a shameful thing ?

CLERK. Wives ?—'oo sent 'em over, d'you suppose ? the Guv'ment ?

GRUMMINS. The Guv'ment ? no ! The Guv'ment 'ud 'av more sense ! It's one of them phi-lan-thro-pists, as every one bolts round the corner when they sees 'em comin'. A rich widder, so they tell me, as thought (*speaking in a high, squeaky voice*) it'd be 'such a treat for the dear men to send their wives over to visit 'em !' (*snorts*). Strange ideas women 'av as to what a man 'ul consider a treat !

CLERK. You'll find you're in for a treat yourself if the Adjutant ain't got 'is field boots yet ! I 'eard 'im 'ollerin' for them ten minutes ago.

GRUMMINS. 'Is boots ? Then why did 'e send me down to the transport officer about them blasted women's tea ? I can't be everywhere at once !

(*Exit in haste and anger.*)

SCENE VI

[*Music*]

A lot of soldiers come in L. with their wives, all laughing and talking at once. One woman, Emma 'Iggins, comes in after the rest, very forlorn, and looking about her for Erb.

ARRIVAL CHORUS

WOMEN. O there was ever such a fuss
when the train broke down !

MEN. Somebody wired for a bus
from the nearest town !

WOMEN. Ain't there a shockin' lot o' dust,
and a bumpy road !
MEN. Luck that a tyre didn't bust,
you was such a load ! (*Great laughter.*)
WOMEN. Father went on about his cough ;
'e was that down-'earted,
Bless you, we couldn't shake 'im off
till the old boat started !
MEN. Shameful to lead you such a dance,
It's a fair disgrace !
I keep on telling 'em as France
is a one-horse place !
WOMEN. While we was standin' on the quay
we was much admired !
MEN. Come on and 'av a cup of tea,
for you make me tired !
WOMEN. Laugh ? Why I thought I should 'av died
sittin' on that bench !
MEN. Pity the butter they applied
was applied in French !
EMMA (*aside*). Keep on a-smilin' if you can
but it's bloomin' fine,
Each of 'em 'angin' to a man
and I can't see mine ! (*weeps*)
WOMEN. You never see a finer night,
and the sea like glass !
Por Mrs. 'Iggins 'ad a fright,
for she lost 'er pass !

(*One woman is jumping along backwards and is just saved from falling by the men.*)

MEN. Mind where you're steppin', Mrs. Lee,
or you'll break your leg !
WOMEN. I'll have a rasher to my tea
and a new-laid egg !

ALL (*jumping about wildly*) :

O was there ever such a lark !
why, we're all in pairs,
Just like the couples in the Ark
going in to prayers !

(*All, except Emma, dance off R. in couples, colliding with Grummins, who is coming in carrying masses of boots, boot-trees, spurs, etc. Some of these clatter down ; he throws the lot on the ground and rushes with a roar of rage after the vanished party.*)

SCENE VII

Spoken

Emma stares, but is too depressed to be amused ; she is fighting tears.

EMMA. Of all the crool things that ever 'appened to anyone, this is the croolest ! (*sniff*). To come all this way to see Erb . . . sixteen of us we was on the steamer . . . (*sniff*) and in the bus . . . And there's fifteen of 'em 'ugging 'er 'usband at this moment . . . and only me as 'ain't got no one to 'ug !

SONG : 'LITTLE THINGS'

Of good luck and bad we 'as our share,
And life's made up of patches,
But it's *little* things that is 'ard to bear—
The tiny rubs and scratches.
When somebody said we was nearing this place,
Thinks I, with a catch in my breath,
' In less than an hour you'll see 'is dear face
And feel 'im 'arf squeeze yer to death ! '

No wonder my heart is fit to burst
With grief and disappointment !
It's little things upsets us worst . . .
Things like a fly in the ointment !

As someone said in a book I've read,
' It's trifles make up your riches ' ;
It's the little ways of anyone dear
That charms you and bewitches !
But humour and study a man as you may
They all likes a bit of variety . . .
And many an 'usband is taken that way . . .
It's quite a Phase of Society !

It's not 'is beauty, you understand,
But just a something about 'im,
And if there's a spree or a rumpus on 'and
Lor bless 'yer, they can't do without 'im !
Yet he's neither sharp nor sulky at home
As most of them popular chaps is,
And his heart is true, though inclined to roam,
Which leads to a few little lapses !

O dear ! those same little lapses !
My appointed cross it perhaps is ! . . .
But as long as he loves me I'll always try
To bear with his slips . . . and collapses !

(*Spoken.*) A good 'usband 'e is, on the 'ole ! Never lifted is 'and to me in his life (*sniff*). . . . 'E *'av* lifted 'is foot once or twice (*breaks down*), but then . . . 'e's me 'usband ! . . .

Scene VIII

[*Dialogue*]

Re-enter Grummins R. Emma, drying her eyes, does not see him, and drifts away up stage, looking this way and that for Erb. Meanwhile Grummins, stooping with some difficulty, begins picking up the boots and boot-trees.

Grummins (*to himself*). I've often thanked my stars that I'm a single man, but never so 'eartfelt as this day. (*Stoops.*) A lot of women comin' screamin' across the Channel like a flock of wild geese, and alighting in this camp where we was all so quiet and comfortable! (*Stoops*) . . .

Emma (*aside*). Ello! 'ere's old Rough and Tumble back again! Dessay 'e was in the fried fish line before 'e got 'is legs tied up in them bandages! (*To Grummins*) Excuse me, General (*the boot-trees clatter down again*), but I'd be obliged if you'd tell me where 'Iggins is; that is when you've quite finished that little game of skittles you're 'avin' all by yourself.

Grummins (*gruffly*). 'Iggins? What 'Iggins? The Army's stiff with 'Igginses.

Emma. My 'usband, Corporal 'Erbert 'Iggins of the 10th London Bridge Regiment. Why didn't 'e come down to the station and meet us, like the rest of 'em did?

Grummins. It's a pity you didn't wire the Colonel you was comin', and I've no doubt e'd have relieved Erb of 'is duties, which is, on Toosdays and Fridays, to buy vittles for the Orficers' Mess (*going*). To-day being Toosday, 'e'll be down at the Market most likely—or, as they calls it 'ere, the Mar-shay.

EMMA. The mar-chay? What sort of chay may that be?

GRUMMINS (*coldly*). I said it like that because that 'appens to be the way the French pronounce the word; but I dessay *you'd* call it the Marsh.

EMMA. Ho! . . . Well, where *is* the Marsh? If it ain't far, I might go a bit of the way to meet Erb. No fear of gettin' your feet wet this weather, Marsh or no Marsh! (*Giggles.*)

GRUMMINS. O, it ain't far, and not 'ard to find either; in fact, if you listen careful to my instructions you can't go wrong.

SONG: 'DIRECTIONS'

You go straight on till you come to the place
  Where the road splits up into two;
Then right . . . *wheel*! Count three paces—
  (One—two—three).
And when you come to the corner
Form . . . *fours*! look for a house,
And a great big dog as guards it!
  (*Woof! woof! woof!*)
You then retire, about . . . *turn*! quick . . . *march*!
And stand at ease, if you can!

And if you meet with a British soldier
Don't get asking *'im* the way,
For he's sure to say: 'I'm a stranger myself,
Just dropped out of an aeroplane—
    Sorry I can't 'elp you!'
And even if 'e told you 'e'd tell you wrong,
And say 'to the right' when 'e means 'to the left,'
As they always do—and always will.
So listen to me, and I'll tell yer once more.

You go straight on till you come to the place
  Where the road splits up into two ;
Then mark . . . *time* ! back three paces !
  (One—two—three).
And once you've rounded the corner
Step . . . *short* ! Don't you start
  To run, or the dog'll chase yer !
  (*Woof ! woof ! woof !*)
And if you're looking for the Marsh,
It ain't as big as Trafalgar Square,
Nor yet as small as a tablecloth,
  In fact, even you can't miss it,
Though you'll turn the right when told to the left,
As you always do—and always will.

Then right . . . *dress* ! left . . . *wheel* !
Slope . . . *arms* ! order . . . *arms* !
Fix . . . *bayonets*—forward! double!! . . . CHARGE!

. . . .

And now you know the way to the Marsh !

(*During above song Grummins has put back the boots in the basket, helped by Emma ; at the end he picks up a beanstick, bestriding it like a charger. Eventually, using it as a lance, he chases Emma round and off the stage, picks up the basket and exit* (*L*.).

INTERMEZZO

Soldiers and market girls cross the stage, laughing and talking, after which the stage remains empty.

Scene VIII

[*Dialogue*]

Emma re-enters L. mopping her face.

Emma. I never see such a rough fella in all my life. 'Go and ask for Erb in the camp,' says 'e. '*I* ain't a gardener,' 'e says, 'it ain't my business to look after your '*erb*-acious border!'

(*Erb comes out of the Notary's house, hastily.*)

Erb (*to himself*). She ain't back yet! that's lucky!

(*Emma looks round.*)

Emma. Erb!!

Erb. Emma! I ain't dreaming, am I?

Emma (*joyously*). If you are there's over a dozen in the regiment with the same complaint! Sixteen of us wives, as large as life and twice as natural, 'av come over to see you and are in the camp at this moment!

(*They embrace fervently.*)

Duet

Erb. O Emma 'Iggins, Emma, my dear!
Often we talked of our wives coming here
But no one thought you would really come!
Emma. O Erbert 'Iggins, Erb, my own boy!
Ain't I a silly fool crying for joy
To think how badly you longed for home!

(*They sit down on the seat.*)

Erb. But, mind you, the people ain't bad!
Emma. Maybe! but I 'eard from a lad
I met in the train that the gurls
Are rather flighty!

ERB. The orficers say we must not
Forget they are foreigners ; Rot !
We find 'em the spit of the gurls
You meet in Blighty !

EMMA. They often talked of sending us out ;
Sometimes we'd hope, and at other times doubt
And pray so hard that it might come true !
ERB. A curious thing how dreams'll deceive !
Only last night I was home on leave,
Sitting at tea with the kids and you !

EMMA. And Erb, how the children have grown !
I tell you I never have known
A child put on flesh at the rate
Our little Jane does !
ERB. Queer, ain't it, how luck in a lump
'll send a man right off his chump,
And catch 'im just here in the side
The same as pain does !

BOTH. O, Emma 'Iggins, Emma, my dear, *etc.*
O, Erbert 'Iggins, Erb, my old dear, *etc.*

SCENE IX

[*Dialogue*]

Bill emerges from the Notary's house.

BILL (*to himself*). Well, I'm blest if he isn't cuddling the young woman already ! (*Aloud*) Erb, you blackguard ! (*Sees who it is.*) 'Ello !

ERB (*wildly excited*). Bill, Bill ! It wasn't the Waacs they was ringing up about ! It was our wives come over to visit us !

EMMA (*also wildly excited.*) 'Ow de do, Mr. Baylis! Now ain't you sorry you're not a married man this day! And to think of it! just before we started I see a sweet young thing and I says to Mrs. Lee, 'That's the mortal cut for our Bill!' . . . But come along, Erb! The first thing *we*'ve got to do is send off a picture postcard to the kids! I see a lot in a winder as we come through the village! (*She seizes Erb's arm.*)

BILL. I'm afraid he can't go with you now, Mrs. Higgins. He 'ad a little difference about a chicken with a market lady as promised to be back in this identical spot in five minutes. . . .

ERB. Was there ever such a bit of bad luck! to-day of all days!

BILL. . . . and as he don't talk French I've got to see him through the job, or I'd have been only too pleased to conduct you myself!

EMMA. Don't you worry! That'll be all right! Show me a picture postcard I fancy, and you bet I'll freeze on to it some'ow, French or no French! . . . . So long, Erb! I'll be back directly. But don't you move from this spot whatever you do. (*Exit Emma.*)

BILL. Well, you see, the young woman's not back yet and there was no call for you to rush out like that . . . though I dessay if you'd known 'oo was waiting for you, you'd not have been in such a violent hurry!

ERB. O shut up! Did you get the paper from the Notaire?

BILL (*handing Erb a large official-looking document with seals*). Here it is, and I must say it seems to me to put the thing in a nutshell.

ERB. Nutshell! I don't see much nutshell about it! why, it's as long as my arm! What's it all about?

BILL. It's just a formality.

ERB. Do you mean to tell me I shall 'av to get this paper signed every time I buy a chicken ?

BILL. Look 'ere, my lad, I ain't paid for crystal-gazin' and foretellin' the future. What'll 'appen next I can't say, but that is what's got to 'appen now, you bet !

ERB. But jest look at this 'ere seal and all this about the French Republic ! What's the French Republic got to do with buying a chicken ? I suppose you told the Notaire that was what I was after ?

BILL (*patiently*). Didn't you 'ear me say ' pool, pool ' a dozen times ? Well—that's the French for chicken.

ERB. I 'ear you say ' pool, pool ' right enough, and I see the Notaire a larfin' and a sniggerin' to 'imself like anything. What's there to larf at in a chicken ? that's what *I'd* like to know !

BILL. 'Ere she is, pool an' all !

SCENE X

Unnoticed by the men, Jeanne has come in L. and, passing behind them, is now setting up her trestle R. near the footlights, putting the bird, etc., on it.

BILL (*eagerly*). It's all right, madam ! (*He hands paper to Jeanne.*) I explained to the Notaire just what we wanted, and 'e told me, confidential like, that any woman alive 'ud be willing to put 'er name to this paper !

ERB. From what you tell us your 'usband is a wary bird as 'll 'op clear of the lime-twig every time. Well, you may take it from me that 'e'd be the first to *urge* you to sign !

Jeanne is perusing the document with signs of astonishment and amusement, furtively studying the men's faces.)

JEANNE. You *wish* me to sign this paper ?

ERB. Yes ! Yes ! Why, I can't get a move on till you do ! But first of all, 'ere's the money (*planks it*

down)—now for the pool—(*takes and crams the chicken into his rucksack*). 'Ere's my signature, and 'ere—(lend us a pencil, Bill)—'ere's the place for yours. By the way, what *is* your name ?

JEANNE. My name is Jeanne Arcot ; what you say in English, Jane !

ERB (*clapping the paper on the trestle and handing Jeanne the pencil*). Well, then, my pretty Jane, 'ere goes ! one—two—three . . . off !

(*In the meantime two or three market women, who are joined later by a few men, have come in and are looking on in the background.*)

MUSIC

[*Ensemble*]

JEANNE (*poising pencil archly*). I see at once I please you veree well !

ERB. That's right, dear, so you do !

JEANNE. And you also, you please me veree well !

ERB (*rather perturbed*). Glad to 'ear it, I'm sure ! (*To Bill*) What on earth is she driving at ?

BILL. It's just a foreign way they have.

(*Jeanne runs over to the group with the paper, and evidently explains something that makes them nearly die of laughter.*)

ERB. What on earth are they laughing at ?

BILL. Them French'll laugh at anything or nothing!

CHORUS (*singing nonsense French among themselves*).

O là là ! rataplan, rataplan !
Ki Konka dee ! rataplan !

ERB. I'm half inclined to go back on the deal, and make her take back the pool ! (*He twists his bag round.*)

BILL. Don't do that ! the bird's a bargain !

(*Jeanne has imposed silence on the crowd and approaches Erb.*)

JEANNE (*pointing*). Is that your name, 'Er*bert* 'Ig*gins*'?

ERB. I don't deny it!

JEANNE AND CHORUS. Er*bert* 'Ig*gins*! Pritti name! joli nom!

ERB. But *we* pronounce it a little bit different . . . *Er*bert '*Ig*gins!

JEANNE. But *you* pronounce it a little bit different,
*Er*bert '*Ig*gins! A pritti name! O, yes, I sign! . . .
But first I kiss that name! (*does so with effusion*).

ERB (*terrified*).
Bill! whatever is she up to now!
She's kissin' of my name, I do declare!

BILL (*to the sky*).
There's some 'as a knack of wakin' love,
And Erb 'Iggins is said to be one!

CHORUS. Shattena, rattena, topo see! . . . rataplan, *etc.*

JEANNE. And what a pritti name I'll 'av!

ERB. What d'yer mean?

JEANNE. A charming name! Jane 'Iggins!

ERB (*loudly*). Jane . . . *what?*

JEANNE. And I know we shall be 'appy together!

BILL. A case of love at first sight! Por girl!
She don't know you've a wife at home!

(*Erb advances with decision on Jeanne, who evades him.*)

ERB. What's that paper you've got in your 'and?

JEANNE. Nautee boy! 'e know ver' well! . . .
OUR MARRIDGE CONTRAK! I sign it!

CHORUS. Sor mari O lay ! rataplan ! *etc.*

ERB (*chasing Jeanne*).—
Stop, don't sign it !
I tell you I'm a *married man* !

CHORUS. Homme marié ! Ohè shocking !

JEANNE. That is nozing ! I, too, 'av an 'usband . . . !
What matter ? (*With enthusiasm*)
VIVE L'ENTENTE CORDIALE !

VALSE

All dance about singing 'Vive l'Entente Cordiale !' Erb, danced off by the girls, tries to catch Jeanne, who is calling out without ceasing, 'Jane 'Iggins !' The bird falls out of the rucksack and gets kicked about like a football. Emma suddenly appears, unnoticed (L.), and stares in amazement; Bill Baylis, seeing her, makes off hastily.

EMMA (*aside*). Well, I never did ! (*Aloud*) *ERB !*

ERB. *Emma ! !* Well . . . I'm . . .

EMMA. What do you mean by chasing that huzzy ?

ERB (*stammering*). Well . . . it's part of a French game ! . . . someone's got to catch 'er . . .

EMMA (*in a terrible voice*). How funny ! Please carry on . . . don't stop for me !

CHORUS (*in mock terror*). Mon Dieu !

EMMA (*very politely to Jeanne*). Excuse me, madam, but did I catch the name *Jane* 'Iggins ?

JEANNE. A leetle joke, madame ! only a leetle joke, madame !

EMMA. Indeed ! (*To Erb*) And what's that paper in 'er 'and ?

ERB (*desperate*). Ask Bill Baylis, as done it all ! (*Calling*) Baylis, Bill Baylis !

CHORUS. Fidon coco ! Shattena, rattena, topo see ! *etc.*

EMMA (*to Jeanne*). What's in that paper ?

JEANNE. It's nozing ! It's nozing ! (*She retreats.*)

EMMA. Let me see it, if you please, at once !

(*Emma advances on Jeanne : the girls begin jabbering nonsense to Emma, as if explaining matters, and carefully head her off Jeanne.*)

EMMA (*furious*). Erb ! if you're a man don't let these women make a fool of me !

(*Erb tries to break through and get at Jeanne : same business as before. In fits of laughter Jeanne backs before him holding the paper out of his reach.*)

(*Enter R., unnoticed, Charles Arcot, a big pompous-looking French soldier. He steps behind Jeanne and snatches the paper from her. She gives a loud shriek, as do the girls. Charles glances at the paper.*)

CHARLES (*furiously to Jeanne*). Canaille ! . . . (*To Erb, fiercely*) What for you chasing my wife ?

EMMA. *Your* wife ? He don't want *your* wife ! 'Ere's his own !

CHARLES (*to Jeanne, who approaches him pleadingly*). Tais-toi ! Va-t-en !

EMMA (*to Erb, who does the same thing*). Don't talk to *me* !

CHORUS (*awed*). Rataplan, rataplan !

(*Charles raps furiously on the paper and points to a certain line.*)

CHARLES (*to Erb*). Are you Erbert 'Iggins ?

ERB. I am !

EMMA (*defiantly*). And I'm 'is wife !

CHARLES (*with a deep bow*). Madame ! I congratulate you ! Your 'usband miss you so bad, madame . . . 'e buy a French marridge contrak, madame . . . to console 'imself with a French wife . . . with MY

wife . . . madame ! (*Tears up the paper in a fury and stamps upon it.*)

ERB. It's enough to drive a sane man crazy !

JEANNE. Écoutes, mon haricot, écoutes !

CHARLES. Va-t-en canaille !

EMMA (*shrieking*). Erb ! you've done it once too often, and my heart's broke ! (*She collapses on the seat. Erb props her against the tree and rushes to the wings shouting for Baylis.*)

CHORUS. O là là ! coco ! Van Houten cacao ! Kee Konda dee !

CHARLES (*stalking after Erb*). And you, Mister 'Iggins ! Sword or revolver ! which you please !

CHORUS (*alarmed*). Pass ze batter ! pass ze batter !

(*Outside a motor horn hoots violently. The Adjutant, hooting all the time, crosses the back of the stage on his bicycle L. to R. : the Chorus scatter.*)

ERB (*to Charles*). Hold hard ! it's the Adjutant !

CHORUS. Gare ! rataplan, rataplan !

(*Transformation scene. . . . The Chorus goes off on tiptoe : the music dies away. The Adjutant re-enters on foot.*)

SCENE XI

[*Dialogue*]

Emma cautiously revives from her swoon : Erb stands stiff with rolling eyes ; Charles ditto, both at the salute. Jeanne calmly arranges her cap, picks up the bird and puts it on the trestle. Long silence.

ADJ. What is all this about ? (*To Emma*) Who are you ?

EMMA (*rising, quite recovered*). I'm Corporal 'Iggins's wife, sir, as come over this morning with

fifteen other wives . . . *unexpected*! And what I caught 'im at may be part of 'is military dooties, and I dessay 'e'll tell me it is . . . but all I can say is . . .

JEANNE (*interrupting*). It is all a joke, m'sieu! I tell my 'usband so, but 'e too angry to listen!

CHARLES. If M'sieu l'Adjutant will permit me . . .

ERB (*interrupting*). Please, sir, it's all a misunderstandin' caused by Private Baylis (*bitterly*) 'oo up and 'ooked it as soon as 'e see things was getting unpleasant.

ADJ. (*angrily*). Someone fetch Private Baylis at once! (*As he speaks, Bill, who, well concealed, has been following the proceedings, now steps forward quite naturally.*)

ADJ. What is the meaning of this disgraceful scene?

BILL (*smoothly*). It's quite easy explained, sir, and there ain't anything as need 'urt any feelings on either side (*clears his throat*). Corporal 'Iggins bought a chicken of this 'ere young woman, and couldn't make 'er understand it was your orders she should sign a receipt. And sign she would *not*. So we went to the Notaire Publeek and arst 'im to give us a bit of writing to show it was all on the square. But Corporal 'Iggins, through not knowing the language, didn't make clear to the Notaire what 'e really wanted. (*Erb's face is a study.*)

ADJ. (*to Erb*). Do you mean to say you couldn't even explain that you wanted to buy a chicken and get a receipt?

BILL (*quickly*). 'E did, sir! 'e repeated the word 'pool' continuous. . . .

ADJ. (*impatiently*). The word isn't 'pool' at all! It's 'pou*let*'!

BILL. That's right, sir! *You* know that, of course, and so do I. But Corporal 'Iggins didn't, and that's where the trouble come in. For 'e kep on sayin' 'pool, pool,' and I rather think the notary took it to be a term

of endearment ; much as we might speak of a young woman in England as a ' duck,' sir.

ERB (*aside*). Well, I'm damned !

(*Jeanne impetuously pulls her husband aside and explains with drastic action, while he gradually unbends.*)

BILL (*continuing*). So 'e draws up a marriage contract, thinking that was what we was after ; and Corporal 'Iggins 'avin' signed innercent like, he arst the young woman to put '*er* name to it, which she started to do, just for a bit of fun. Then Mrs. 'Iggins come along, followed by the young woman's 'usband ; and the lot of 'em commenced kicking up a randyvous.

ADJ. I never heard such infernal muddling and foolishness in all my life ! (*Dramatically*) This sort of thing is enough to break up the *Entente Cordiale* !

CHARLES (*stepping forward*). Pardon, Monsieur l'Adjutant ! I inter*pret* for the English Army ! My wife explain they ask her to sign a receipt, and she not understand, and ask Monsieur l'Adjutant to pardon her . . . and you 'av no more trouble !

(*During this speech Erb and Emma are busily making it up.*)

ADJ. (*greatly relieved*). Merci, mon brave ! Alors tout est bieng ! (*To Erb and Bill*) Good heavens, if you think what a fuss *you* make if you're asked to do any little thing you haven't done every blessed day of your lives, can you wonder the market ladies fought shy of doing a thing *they* aren't accustomed to ? (*To the Chorus, who, seeing all is well, have crept in again*) Je dis, mesdames, que tout cela était parfaitement naturelle ! Nous Anglais sont comme vous ; nous n'aimons pas les choses que nous ne sommes pas accoutumé à !

CHORUS. Ah ! très bien ! (*Much enthusiasm.*) Rataplan, rataplan ! ki konka dee ! *etc.*

ADJ. Baylis, go up to the Mess and carry on for Corporal Higgins. . . . Alors bonjour, mesdames !

(*He salutes the enchanted chorus, who bustle off market-wards, and goes out* (*R.*). *Charles and Jeanne remain near the tree, making up their late quarrel very lovingly. Bill scowls at Erb and prepares to follow the Adjutant.*)

SCENE XII

[*Chorus*]

Enter (*R.*) *the soldiers and their wives beckoned forward by Bill.*

CHORUS. Here they are ! found at last ! . . .
Why, Mrs. 'Iggins, where on earth
Have you been hiding ?

BILL. The ladies thought you'd gone back home
With the nice young chap you met in the train,
Or else gone off with a Frenchman.

EMMA. Lost or mislaid ? off on my own ?
Not this time ! . . . though maybe there are some
As rather wishes I was ! (*digs Erb in the ribs*).

CHORUS. O, come along, come along, the water's on the boil !
There's hot buttered toast and a nice cold ham,
And a mass of rolls and marmalade and jam,
You never see such a spread !

Enter the market ladies ; one carries a huge poster-like sheet of paper on which the words CONTRAT DE MARIAGE are scrawled in huge letters ; the rest

carry market produce. The poster-bearer mounts on to the seat, displaying her poster; her companions group themselves round her.

FRENCH CHORUS.
Contrat de mariage! Mar*ridge* Con*trak*!

(*Jeanne and Charles are delighted. Enter also male French peasants and Grummins.*)

ENGLISH CHORUS.
'Ello, Erb? What's the meaning of this?
What have you been up to?
GRUMMINS. What 'as 'e been up to?
Why, the same old game you all plays at home!
But here we call it . . .
JEANNE, EMMA, ERB, BILL, CHARLES, and GRUMMINS. The Entente Cordiale!
FRENCH CHORUS. Vive l'Entente Cordiale! Rataplan! *etc.*
ENGLISH CHORUS. And long may it be cordial!
Ain't the French ways just like our own,
Though you mightn't think so, perhaps, at first!
In fact, they're exactly the same!

Egged on by Charles and the French males, the French girls crowd round Erb, waving poster, chickens, and vegetables, and crying, 'Marridge Contrak!'

ENGLISH CHORUS. Come on—tea's ready!

General scrimmage, the English try to rescue Erb from the French group. All gradually work across stage to R. back, the English finally getting away, the French roaring with laughter.

CURTAIN.

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